Israel demands $23m from PNA

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel demanded on Sunday the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) settle a 75 million shekel ($23 million) bill with Israeli utilities and other state-owned companies, the treasury said. "The Palestinian Authority promised to respond within 24 hours to the treasury's demand it pay its debt to Israeli companies," the treasury said in a statement issued after its director-general, David Brodet, met a Palestinian delegation. It said the PNA owed the money to service providers such as Bezeq Israel Telecom, Israel Electric Corporation, the Mekorot water company and Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital. PNA officials were not immediately available for comment. "The treasury's demand for immediate settlement of the Palestinian Authority's debts is a matter of principle," the statement said. The PNA cabinet statement on Friday accused Israel of withholding "70 million shekels of the PNA's tax money from last month as part of the siege on the authority." An Israeli treasury spokeswoman refused to comment on the withholding.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

جوردان تايمز يومية [illegible] عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Kabariti receives cables from Albright

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti on Sunday received two cables from United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in which she praised His Majesty King Hussein's important role in pushing the peace process forward. Ms. Albright, who took office on Jan. 20, noted in particular King Hussein's latest efforts in reaching the Hebron accord, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said. Ms. Albright also commended the role of the Jordanian peacekeepers in a number of troubled areas around the world. Ms Albright said that she was looking forward to meeting with King Hussein and Mr. Kabariti in Washington next month to discuss means of boosting peace in the region. The King is to meet President Bill Clinton at the White House on March 18 to discuss ways of reinvigorating the peace process.

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Arafat, Netanyahu to meet on specifics of self-rule deal

Two leaders upbeat after Davos talks, say they agreed to meet at Beit Hanoun on Thursday

DAVOS (Agencies) — *Israeli and Palestinian leaders*, at what they called positive and productive talks in Switzerland, agreed on Sunday to meet again on Thursday for detailed talks on extending Palestinian self-rule.

Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu said the agreement reflected "a great feeling of hope" and that he was confident that he and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat could overcome the obstacles to Middle East peace.

On their troubled bilateral relationship, Mr. Mubarak and Mr. Netanyahu both renewed their commitment to cooperate for the sake of a wider Middle East peace.

"I had a very good meeting with President Mubarak. We talked about advancing peace on all fronts...about advancing our bilateral relations, including in the economic field, and we are committed to doing that," Mr. Netanyahu said.

"Egypt and Israel are the *cornerstone* of peace in the Middle East and we are going to pursue on that foundation peace with everyone," he added.

Mr. Mubarak said: "It was a very good meeting and I hope we can continue like this and enhance the peace process."

Negotiations agreed *under the accord* on Hebron, signed by the two sides last month, will begin next week, Mr. Netanyahu added.

Flanked by Mr. Arafat after a meeting lasting about 40 minutes at the Davos World *Economic* Forum congress hall, Mr. Netanyahu said: "Chairman Arafat and I have had a very productive conversation."

"We are going to meet again in Erez (Beit Hanoun) on Thursday, in order to discuss specific *implementation* of steps by both Israel and the Palestinians on the agreement that we have reached following Hebron."

The Beit Hanoun border crossing is at the north end of the Gaza Strip.

Mr. Netanyahu added: "We will begin the various negotiations that we have discussed the following week as well, and we view this meeting in Davos as an opportunity to effectively chart the course, the practical course for the post-Hebron negotiation and implementation."

"This reflects a new attitude and a new beginning," Mr. Netanyahu told journalists at a briefing minutes later.

"The decision to meet Thursday to iron out problems is a natural and *healthy approach to moving* the process forward."

The Israeli team will include Foreign Minister David Levy who has ministerial responsibility for the post-Hebron implementation "in order to make *sure we have movement* and progress on all the areas we agreed on in."

Mr. Netanyahu also revealed he would be visiting Egypt within two months on an invitation extended by President Hosni Mubarak, with whom he had talks Sunday.

"I intend to take up the invitation," Mr. Netanyahu said, adding he would bring a "very large business delegation."

On the question of resuming negotiations with Syria, Mr. Netanyahu said: "We are looking for a formula on negotiations. I cannot force President (Hafez Al) Assad...(but) I cannot find one single real reason why Israel and Syria cannot resume negotiations."

Mr. Netanyahu said one of the themes in his discussions with the two Middle East leaders was "how we can engage Palestinians and Israelis and Egyptians in high technology ventures."

"I would like to change the so-called division of labour where Israel does high tech and our neighbours do low tech," the *Israeli prime minister said.*

"I think we can surprise a lot of people in the not too distant future."

Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat clinched a Hebron agreement last month but after an initial period of optimism the Palestinians are again complaining that Israel is dragging its feet on carrying out aspects of earlier agreements.

Mr. Mubarak told a news conference that Mr. Arafat was pessimistic but after seeing Mr. Netanyahu, the Palestinian leader's mood had much improved.

"The atmosphere was positive. We have agreed to meet to discuss these matters which have not yet been implemented," Mr. Arafat told reoporters.

The Palestinian demands include the release of prisoners, a safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank, less restrictions on the flow of people and goods between Israel and the Palestinian territories and Israeli clearance for Gaza airport to open and work to start on a Gaza seaport.

President Mubarak told the press briefing that full implementation of the landmark Hebron accord was a

(Continued on page 7)

BLOODY SUNDAY: Unidentified relatives of Bloody Sunday victims carry crosses bearing their names during a commemoration in Londonderry of the 25th anniversary of the massacre on Sunday. Fourteen men were shot dead by British paratroopers on Jan. 30, 1972 (Reuters photo)

Mubarak sees Israel-Syria talks as a matter of time

DAVOS (Agencies) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said on Sunday that a fresh start to peace talks between Israel and Syria was just a question of time and could take *place at any moment.*

Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu, speaking to reporters after his first meeting with Mr. Mubarak since July, said the United States was working on a formula for new talks with Syria, which broke down almost a year ago.

"We're discussing the formula to achieve *resumption of the* talks. The Americans are doing this and I hope they'll be successful," Mr. Netanyahu said.

Mr. Mubarak, asked for his views on the chances for Syrian-Israeli talks, said: "The prospects for starting the talks are possible at any time.

"I believe Syria says it's ready to start the talks, even if it may have some reservations. But this is question of time and it's bound to be resolved."

In a news conference earlier the Egyptian president linked progress on the Syrian-Israeli track to faithful Israeli implementation of its latest agreements with the Palestinians, including last month's deal on the West Bank town of Hebron.

"I think good faith in implementing the Hebron agreement, then go through with negotiations on the final status (of Jerusalem), this will remove the suspicion which is existing" between Israel and the Syrians and Lebanese, he said.

Negotiations "on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks must be resumed without delay" on *the basis of the principle of land-for-peace*, added Mr. Mubarak.

Syria has not taken the Hebron agreement as a sign of a change of heart by Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing government, which took power in June. Damascus says talks must resume where they left off and that Israel had given a private commitment to withdraw *from all of the Golan Heights.*

On their troubled bilateral relationship, Mr. Mubarak and Mr. Netanyahu both renewed their commitment to cooperate for the sake of a wider Middle East peace.

"I had a very good meeting with President Mubarak. We talked about advancing peace on all fronts...about advancing our bilateral relations, including in the economic field, and we are committed to doing that," Mr. Netanyahu said.

"Egypt and Israel are the cornerstone of peace in the Middle East and we are going to pursue on that foundation peace with everyone," he added.

Mr. Mubarak, who for months refused to *meet Mr. Netanyahu until Israel agreed* with the Palestinians on Hebron, said: "It was a very good meeting and I hope we can continue like this and 'enhance the peace process."

Mr. Netanyahu later held talks with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who is also attending the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in the Swiss resort of Davos.

Mr. Arafat has brought a list of complaints about Israeli delays in carrying out some aspects of old peace agreements and Mr. Mubarak told his news conference that Mr. Arafat was pessimistic.

Mr. Mubarak, who acts as unofficial sponsor of the Palestinian negotiating team, urged Israel to keep to its agreements.

"Policies and practices which are illegal and inconsistent with the spirit of peace, such as settlement activities, should be avoided and stopped altogether," Mr. Mubarak added.

Mr. Mubarak said it was important to get progress towards opening an airport and a seaport in Gaza, under control of Palestinian National Authority (PNA), and *implement* other parts of overall accords on peace in the region.

Such moves were essential for the welfare of ordinary Palestinians. "Otherwise they will revolt against their regime," said Mr. Mubarak, speaking in English.

Any people would rise up against a leader *who was not seen to be doing all he could for* them, he added in an echo of concerns voiced by other officials in the region that Israeli intransigence could feed radical opposition to Mr. Arafat.

Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai meanwhile accused Syria on Sunday of supporting "terrorist" groups while at the same time seeking to resume peace talks.

"Syria needs to be interested no less than Israel in advancing the diplomatic process and it needs to use all its influence so that acts of terror won't be carried out," Mr. Mordechai said on Israel Radio.

"I don't know if this is a condition (for reopening negotiations), but certainly the two things *can't advance together*," the defence minister added. "Whoever advances terror can't expect to advance the peace process."

Mahdi: Opposition to open new fronts in Sudan

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudanese rebels fighting the Islamic regime in Khartoum plan to open up new fronts despite international mediation efforts to end the fighting, a rebel leader claimed.

"The fronts will be extended," Sadeq Al Mahdi said in an interview with Kuwait's Al Rai Al Aam newspaper published Sunday. "I tell you the war will spread," he added.

So far fighting in Africa's largest country has been limited to the east of the country with some reports of fighting spreading to the south, where Sudan borders Uganda, but the *progress of the fighting has* appeared slow.

The Ugandan minister of state for defence told the Sunday Vision newspaper the Ugandan army does not plan to attack Sudan, to go after Sudanese-based rebels.

"This government respects international borders and therefore we are not planning any such action," Amama Mbabazi said.

Concern about the possible spread of the conflict led last week to an offer by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to mediate between the rebel National Democratic Alliance (NDA) — the umbrella movement grouping rebels and *opposition* groups — and the government in Khartoum.

(Continued on page 7)

Panel being set up to campaign for release of Kuwait-held Jordanians

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Freedoms Committee of the Professional Associations' Union on Sunday announced the creation of a national committee to follow up on the situation of Jordanian prisoners in Kuwait.

The creation of the committee came against reports of mistreatment of Jordanians serving term in Kuwait after they were convicted of "collaborating" with Iraq during the 1990-91 Iraqi occupation of the emirate.

Independent sources have confirmed that a special unit of Kuwaiti security forces stormed the Salbiya prison in Kuwait on Jan. 22 armed with clubs and batons and beat up Jordanian prisoners in apparent retaliation for their public appeal for release and protest against bad detention conditions.

At least 20 Jordanian prisoners suffered broken bones and three of them remained in hospital. The government said it was seeking to officially estab*lish that Jordanian citizens* were targeted for violence and that it could not adopt any action until it receives a formal confirmation of the incident.

The Kuwaiti government has denied reports of the violence.

The International Red Cross, which has access to the prison, has declined to confirm or deny the incident.

In a letter sent to a local daily, the Red Cross Society of Kuwait confirmed that security forces had entered the prison but were searching for drugs in the cells. It did not refer to any injuries suffered by Jordan*ian prisoners.*

The Freedoms Committee of the Professional Associations Union, an umbrella organisation which includes all professional associations in Jordan, held a meeting Saturday attended by family members of the prisoners to decide on a course of action on behalf of the detainees.

Many of the family members said they had received direct word from Kuwait that the incident took place and that Jordanians were singled out for beating up, which, they said, lasted for nearly three hours.

Ishaq Khairi, chairman of the committee, said he was *setting up another panel* to "follow up closely on the situation of our brothers in Kuwait and to make appeals to everyone who has any influence with the Kuwaiti authorities to

(Continued on page 7)

Four-party committee to visit Kuwait jails and report to Jordan

TWO COMMITTEES *representing* Oman, Qatar, the United States and Britain will visit Jordanian prisoners held in Kuwait on Sunday and report their findings to the Jordanian government, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

Jordan, whose diplomatic mission in Kuwait remains closed since the Gulf crisis, has sought help from these countries to establish the facts about the reported mistreatment of Jordanian prisoners in the emirate.

His Majesty King Hussein called in the American and British ambassadors to Jordan last week and urged them to clarify the situation of Jordanian prisoners in Kuwait. Earlier, the government had contacted the Qatari and Omani authorities seeking their help in the matter.

Petra said Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Yousef Ben Allawi and Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Ben Jassim telephoned Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and informed him of the committees' visit.

Kuwaitis dismiss immediate threat from Iraq

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwaiti analysts on Sunday dismissed reports that President Saddam Hussein might be mobilising his troops for a new offensive on Kuwait, but warned that Iraq remained a long-term threat.

"No, I don't think there is any immediate threat now. But is there an overall threat? Yes," said Kuwaiti political scientist and commentator Shafiq Al Ghabra.

Kuwaiti Information Minister Sheikh Saud Nasser Al Sabah said on Friday he was "deeply concerned" about 150,000 to 180,000 Iraqi troops deployed around 50 kilometres from the border with his country.

Iraqi opposition groups also claimed that Baghdad was strengthening its forces in the south and conducting manoeuvres in the north.

But Iraq denied the claims.

"There is no reinforcement of troops or unusual movement of our army anywhere in Iraq, particularly in the south," an Iraqi military officer said in Baghdad.

An Iraqi official on Sunday dismissed the Kuwaiti claims as a "tempest in a teapot" designed to spark tension in the Gulf and help Washington sell weapons *to the region.*

"It's a tempest in a teapot which allows Iraq's enemies to maintain a state of tension in the region," said Saad Kassem Hammudi, an official charged with Arab and international relations in parliament.

Iraqi Information Minister Yossef Hammadi said Kuwait was still under the influence of foreign forces, and accused his Kuwaiti counterpart of "making up false accusations."

"The Kuwaiti minister is known for his long tradition of telling lies during the time he was ambassador in Washington," added Mr. Hammadi.

Iraqi opposition groups said Saturday that Baghdad was strengthening its forces in the south and also

(Continued on page 7)

Oil-deal supplies expected to arrive in Iraq this month, diplomats report

BAGHDAD (R) — Shipments of food and medical supplies under Iraq's oil deal with the United Nations are expected to start arriving in the country by the end of February, diplomats in Baghdad said on Sunday.

They said money from Iraq's partial oil sales was accumulating in an escrow account in New York and the United Nations was expected to be able to pay during this month for the deployment of observers and purchases of wheat, sugar, rice and other essential commodities.

"A couple of food observers have already arrived. More are expected in coming weeks which means that the U.N. has finally got some of the oil money," one diplomat said.

A U.N. spokesman said on Thursday money paid into an escrow account holding proceeds from the sale of Iraqi oil would total $239 million by the end of the day, when a deposit of $23.4 million was expected.

The account was opened under an oil-for-food deal that became effective on Dec. 10. It enables Iraq to sell $2 billion of oil over six months to buy food, medicine and other humanitarian supplies to help offset the effects of sanctions imposed on Iraq since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The U.N. needs to position about 151 international observers in Iraq before stocks of supplies from the partial oil sales are built up and then handed out to Iraqis.

Iraq's oil hit the international markets on Dec. 12 and diplomats said barring unforseen difficulties Iraqis should be able to get their new food rations from the oil money by the end of March.

Iraq was said to have signed contracts to buy wheat from both France and Australia. Traders in Baghdad said contracts for the purchase of rice, sugar and other commodities from France, Thailand and Turkey were also signed.

But diplomats said no money for any of the contracts was yet paid from Iraq's escrow account. Iraq has earmarked about $805 million of its oil money for food supplies and $210 million for medicine.

It needs 1.3 million tonnes of wheat flour, 319,000 tonnes of rice and 256.00 tonnes of sugar to meet needs covering six months.

One diplomat said Iraqi and U.N. officials were busy trying to remove last hurdles on the duties of U.N.

(Continued on page 7)

Netanyahu faces tough issues with Pope today

VATICAN CITY (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu will meet Pope John Paul II for the first time on Monday and come under pressure to pursue Middle East peace and discuss the future of Jerusalem, Vatican officials said.

The Pope will insist that efforts be intensified in the Middle East peace process so that "the modest amount of trust gained will not be lost, but instead, expanded and strengthened," an official said, quoting Pontiff remarks earlier this month.

"Everything must be tried, so that the sacrifices and efforts made in recent years, since the (1991) Madrid peace conference, will not be in vain," the Pope said shortly after meeting Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in early January.

The Pope said peace in the Middle East threatened to be temporary if it was not based on "faithful discussions between equal partners, respecting the identity and history of each one, along with their independence and security."

The 76-year-old Pope will also raise with Mr. Netanyahu the sensitive issue of Jerusalem, which Israel claims as its "undivided" capital but which is sacred to Christians, Jews and and Muslims.

The Vatican has been pressing for an "international guarantor" for the holy parts of the city, which could fall under the responsibility of the U.N. Security Council.

This would be done under the auspices of U.N. Resolution 181 and in coordination with Israel and the Palestinians, along with the co-sponsors of the peace process, Russia and the United States, a Vatican official said.

The resolution, approved by the U.N. General Assembly in 1947, calls for sharing parts of the Holy City with the Palestinians and creating local districts under U.N. administration.

But Israeli governments, particularly the current right-wing coalition led by Mr. Netanyahu, have rejected any attempts to reduce the Jewish state's self-declared sovereignty over Jerusalem, the eastern part of which it "annexed" in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

The Pope has repeatedly said that any Middle East peace would be short-lived without a final solution to the issue of Jerusalem, which the Palestinians also claim as the capital of a future state.

The Pontiff raised the point when the last senior Israeli official to visit the Vatican, Religion Minister Shimon Shetreet, came a year ago.

In addition, talks with Mr. Netanyahu will include a possible papal visit to Jerusalem, which John Paul II has repeatedly said is one of his dreams.

RELIEF NOT YET: Iraqis shop at an outdoor market in Baghdad for essential foods. Iraq's Central Bank Governor Isam Hweish said Saturday that despite U.N. sanctions, imposed on Baghdad for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, trade across its borders with Jordan, Turkey and Iran helped maintain a supply of some necessary goods. Iraqi officials said Sunday that the first shipment of food and medicine under Baghdad's oil-for-food deal with the United Nations is expected to arrive by end of this month (Reuters photo)

Iraq accuses diplomats of stealing artifacts

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Diplomats and U.N. employees have been robbing Iraq of its ancient artifacts and selling them to a european and Iraqi smuggling ring, an antiquities official charged here sunday.

"Diplomats and UN employees are benefitting from the lack of security in the north (of Iraq) to buy and send the archeological treasures abroad," Mouayed Said, director of the Iraqi Archeological Department, told the official press.

The official denounced "parties in Europe who are helped by Iraqis to encourage the theft and smuggling of these items."

Mouayed said the Iraqi authorities had seized three cases bearing the United Nations emblem and that several people involved in the smuggling were arrested.

"The authorities seized several archeological artifacts of great historic value," he added.

After the 1991 Gulf war to free Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, Baghdad accused U.S. soldiers who entered Iraqi territory of having stolen ancient artifacts and asked for Unesco's help in recovering them. Official figures say Iraq posesses more than 10,000 archeological sites, with the majority yet to be excavated. Iraq used to receive many foreign archeological teams before the oil and trade embargo was imposed after its invasion of Kuwait.

Iran exhibits revolutionary art by former Iraqi PoWs

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran has put on display a host of artworks and political literature created by former Iraqi prisoners of war (PoWs) during their captivity here.

The work, which glorifies the Islamic Republic in Iran and the 1979 revolution, are on show in a vacant camp at a military base in central Tehran, where a large number of Iraqi PoWs from the 1980-1988 conflict were once held.

Outside walls of several buildings in the camp formerly used as a dormitory, mosque, clinic and library have been painted with murals or adorned with relief scenes reflecting various themes of the Shiite Muslim revolution.

The works are full of praise of the late founder of the Islamic republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and denounciation of Iran's arch enemies, Israel and the United States, and the current Iraqi regime.

Highlighting the "international" nature of Iran's revolution, one scene in relief portrays an Iranian warrior holding a volume of the Koran in one hand and an "Islamic international" banner in the other, leading Palestinian and other Muslim militants in a joint struggle against "world oppression."

The murals are full of didactic images of prisoners reaching "political awareness," embracing the Shiite doctrine and sacrificing themselves for the cause.

In one painting, a man is trapped in barbed wire in a figurative demonstration of his captivity, but his soul manages to break free and fly to heaven.

On an extended wall, a dozen paintings depict the various stages of a prisoner's evolution from his supposed "base animal self" to a higher moral existence in tune with the ideals of the Islamic revolution.

A creature — part-man, part-horse — is shown first slaying his animal half with a spear, then flying as a complete man towards Ayatollah Khomeini's shrine, where he settles to engage in philosophical contemplation.

He then makes a choice and dedicates his life to the revolution, before rising to heaven.

Inside the camp buildings, a myriad of paintings show Iraqis prostrate before Ayatollah Khomeini. In one, a prisoner exposes the inside of his chest with a picture of the late leader, who died in 1989, as his heart.

The library in the camp has a modest collection of books on general Islamic ethics, jurisprudence and philosophy as well as Shiite publications. In addition, volumes of handwritten notebooks have been left behind by the prisoners, all of which affirm the revolutionary Shiite doctrine and denounce the present Iraqi regime.

"A prisoner confined within the barbed wire leading a lonely life away from his family and his roots has only God for an option," said the secretary of Iran's PoW commission, Asgar Ruhnavaz, who organised the exhibition.

"We try to give it to him and keep his hope alive and sanity preserved," he said.

The prisoners also wrote a number of political plays, which were staged during their internment for entertainment.

The walls in a large hall are adorned with pictures of prisoners performing mass prayers of "repentance," hoping to abjure the "sinful" ways of their past.

Around 12,000, or one-quarter of the total Iraqi PoWs, have reportedly been granted political asylum in Iran, many of whom are believed to have fought for Iran against their country or participated in the Shiite uprising in Iraq in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf war.

In one room, large stacks of white blankets are displayed with the signature of prisoners demanding to be allowed to fight against the "infidel" President Saddam Hussein in hopes of expiating their "guilt."

Iraq claims 20,000 of its prisoners are still kept in Iran and has in the past accused Tehran of brainwashing them.

But Mr. Ruhnavaz rejected such claims.

"If an artist is not up to creating, there is no way you can make him do it," he said, insisting that the feelings behind the works were genuine.

Annan sees opportunity for Cyprus settlement

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP) — U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Saturday that the United Nations hoped to use heightened tensions in Cyprus to push for a settlement on the divided island.

Mr. Annan said it was pointless to put off peace efforts just because the Greek Cypriot government had decided to buy Russian anti-aircraft missiles. Tensions escalated further after Turkey sent three warships to the Turkish-occupied north to show solidarity with Turkish Cypriots.

"We are accelerating our discussion" with leaders of both sides, Mr. Annan said. "We think we have a window of opportunity in the early part of this year to really try to make a difference."

Mr. Annan said the United Nations in general opposes importation of more weapons into the region.

Cyprus has been unofficially partitioned since 1974, when Turkey invaded in the wake of a short-lived coup by supporters of union with Greece. The breakaway state where Turkey maintains 35,000 troops is recognised only by Ankara.

Mr. Annan said his special envoy for Cyprus, former South Korean Foreign Minister Han Sung-Joo, hoped to start talks through mediation and follow with face-to-face meetings.

The official Cyprus News Agency (CNA) said on Sunday, The United Nations is to make a formal complaint to the Cyprus government after protesters hurled abuse at the U.N.'s top military commander on the island.

Waldemar Rokoszewski, spokesman for the U.N. Force In Cyprus (UNFICYP), said the incident on Saturday at a checkpoint on the U.N.-patrolled green line dividing the island violated signed agreements.

Brigadier General Ahti Toimi Paavali Vartiainen, UNFICYP commander, and a group of 15 people were harassed as they arrived at a checkpoint on the green line to cross into the Turkish-occupied north of the island.

Greek-Cypriot demonstrators who had gathered at the checkpoint to dissuade tourists from visiting the north shouted abuse and attacked the general's vehicle.

"This is a violation of the status of the first agreement between the government of the republic and the U.N. in 1965 which provides for complete freedom of movement for UNFICYP personnel," Mr. Rokoszewski told CNA.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Egypt to release 300 prisoners

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt will release 2,300 prisoners, including 300 militants, to mark 'Eid Al-Fitr, an Interior Ministry official said Sunday. Speaking under customary anonymity, the official said the militants have repented and vowed not to resort to violence again. Others to be freed were convicted of various crimes and have records of good conduct in prison. Militants launched a campaign of violence in spring 1992 to oust Egypt's secular government and set up a government under their version of Islam. More than 1,000 people have been killed in the struggle, mainly police and extremists. 'Eid Al-Fitr is expected to fall on Feb. 9, depending on the rising of the moon starting the next month under the Islamic Lunar calendar.

Lights off in Turkish protest of state-mafia links

ANKARA (AP) — Lights went out for a minute in thousands of homes all over Turkey on Saturday night at the start of a month-long campaign to push authorities to "shed light" on alleged state-mafia ties. At 9:00 p.m. (1900 GMT), participants switched off lamps for the "one minute of darkness for eternal light" campaign. The protest action was designed as a show of public anger at the lack of progress on investigations into allegations that state officials aided wanted hit men and gangs in return for their underground services. The ties emerged in November, after a wanted gangster, a police chief and an internationally wanted terrorist were killed together in a car crash. A government deputy escaped the crash with slight injuries. So far, the scandal has cost the jobs of an interior minister and several police officers, but no one has been brought to trial. Organisers say they have received thousands of faxes by people pledging support. Many celebrities and prominent businessmen have also promised to participate. Private radio stations joined the one-minute blackout, airing a long beep instead of music. Nearly 100,000 workers marched in Ankara last month to protest the state's alleged links to mobsters and to press for anti-corruption measures.

3 arrested in $84,880 robbery in Bahrain

BAHRAIN (AP) — Three Bahrainis have been arrested in connection with 32,000 dinars ($84,880) in an unusual robbery involving the waylaying of a car on this island nation's roads. The money was stolen from two employees of a money exchange company, newspapers reported Sunday, quoting an interior ministry statement. It said two men, Hani Abbad and Abdul Hussain Shamlan, confessed to carrying out the robbery. It was not clear when the robbery took place, nor what weapons were involved. It was believed to be the first case reported in Bahrain where robbers stopped and held up people in a car. A third person, Riyadh Abbas Ali, an accounts clerk with the Bahrain financing company, was arrested after the two men revealed his involvement in the crime. the newspapers quoted the ministry statement as saying. He also confessed, the papers said.

Iran sees Armenia as bridge to Europe

DUBAI (R) — Armenia Could offer neighbouring Iran a link to Europe, the speaker of the Iranian parliament told his visiting Armenian counterpart, Iran's official news agency IRNA reported on Sunday. Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri told Babken Ararktsyan on Saturday that Iran was willing to further broaden relations with Armenia and offer it a communication bridge with the Gulf, IRNA said. Armenia, too, could link Iran with Europe, he said. IRNA gave no further details of the proposal but said Nateq-Nouri, a candidate in an election to replace outgoing President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani this year, also expressed hope that the crisis in Karabakh would shortly be solved by negotiation and without the interference of foreign powers. The agency quoted Mr. Ararktsyan as saying that Armenia and Iran had maintained good relations in every area and could develop them even further.

Libya: U.S. has no right to talk of rights

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Libya said Saturday the United States was in no position to speak about the state of human rights around the world and accused it of ignoring abuses in its own backyard. Responding to the annual U.S. State Department report on human rights, a Libyan offical said: "It would have been more logical for the United States to concern itself with the violations of human rights at home," which, he said, had been highlighted by "several international organisations." he said the United States therefore had no right to call itself "the guardian of human rights in the world." the U.S. survey of 194 countries and territories was published on Thursday. Libya is under both U.S. and U.N. sanctions because of its alleged support for terrorism.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
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PROGRAMME TWO

13:30	Cartoon
14:30	Deep Water Haven
15:00	Feature Film — "The Case of the Witch who Wasn't"
16:50	Call for Prayer and Iftar
17:30	I Love Lucy
18:00	Magazine Science — Cinq Sur Cinq
19:30	News Headlines
19:35	Roseanne
20:02	Documentary
20:30	Babylon 5 (Science Fiction)
21:10	Drama — Extreme
22:00	News in English
22:25	Journey Across the Land of Islam
23:00	Under Suspicion
23:50	Mini Series — "Blue Grass"
01:05	Ramadan Talks

PRAYER TIMES

05:05	Fajr
06:24	(Sunrise) Duha
11:49	Dhuhr
14:48	'Asr
17:14	Maghreb
18:34	'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh. Tel. 810740
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Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 827126
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

A cold air mass accompanied by a depression will affect the Kingdom today and last until Tuesday. Rainfall is expected with clouds building up and winds westerly active. Effective Monday night, snow is expected to fall over hilly areas with 1,000 metres above sea level. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman	03/08
Aqaba	07/18
Deserts	02/10
Jordan Valley	08/16

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 09, Aqaba 17 Humidity readings: Amman 61 per cent, Aqaba 49 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Wafiq Qaddoumi	893542
Dr. Bahjat Bader	832642
Dr. Naser Ibrahim	830432
Dr. Mohammad Al-Ghoul	790730
Ferdows pharmacy	778336
Al Asema pharmacy	637055
Nairoukh pharmacy	623672
Al Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shmeisani pharmacy	637660
Nairoukh pharmacy	
Najib pharmacy	847632

IRBID:

Dr Ghazi Ta'ameh	250080
Al Quds pharmacy	(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Waleed Nabhan	995743
Khalifeh pharmacy	985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue	630341
Civil Defence Emergency	199
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	617101
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Dept.	630321
Hotel Complaints	605800
Price Complaints	661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality Complaints	787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)	121
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone Reparis	623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
J. Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power Co.	636381
RJ Flight Information	08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport	08-53200

HOSPITAL

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalidi Maternity	644281/6
Akileh Maternity	642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Malhas, J. Amman	636140
Palestine, Shmeisani	607071
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845845
Al-Muasher Hospital	667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali	666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali	664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen	777101/3
Al-Bashir	775111/26
Army, Marka	891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital	602240/50
Amal Hospital	674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery	865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital	(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital	(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital	(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital	(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital	(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital	(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital	(02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital	(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700)

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

07:15	Sanaa (RJ)
08:35	Jeddah (RJ)
08:55	Damascus (RJ)
09:50	Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05	Beirut (RJ)
11:15	New Delhi (RJ)
14:15	Jakarta, Abu Dhabi (add) (RJ)
16:20	Cairo (RJ)
16:25	London (RJ)
16:45	New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
19:05	Bangkok (RJ)
22:20	Casablanca (RJ)
22:30	Jeddah (add) (RJ)
03:45	Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights

05:45	Khartoum (SD)
09:30	Cairo (MS)
12:00	Doha (Q7)
12:40	Bahrain (GF)
15:05	Vienna (OS)
21:00	Paris, Damascus (AF)
21:40	Tel Aviv (LY)
22:45	Athens, Beirut (OA)
00:30	London, Damascus (BA)
01:20	Amsterdam, Damascus (KL)
05:05	London (KJ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

09:20	Aqaba (RW)
20:50	Aqaba (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

06:20	Beirut (RJ)
09:30	Casablanca (RJ)
11:00	Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
11:00	Abu Dhabi, Jakarta (add) (RJ)
12:15	Cairo (RJ)
12:30	Frankfurt, London (RJ)
17:30	Jeddah (add) (RJ)
21:00	Abu Dhabi (RJ)
21:15	Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
22:45	Sanaa (RJ)
23:00	Damascus (RJ)
23:30	Bahrain, Doha (RJ)

Other Flights

06:00	Istanbul (TK)
07:35	Beirut, London (BA)
07:45	Beirut (ME)
10:20	Cairo (MS)
13:00	Doha (Q7)
13:30	Bahrain (GF)
15:50	Vienna (OS)
22:50	Tel Aviv (LY)
23:55	Damascus, Paris (AF)
02:30	Amsterdam (KL)
03:00	Beirut, Athens (OA)
07:30	London (KJ)
07:35	Damascus, London (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

09:50	Marka Airport (from QAIA) (RW)
20:30	Aqaba (RW)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman — 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus — 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus — 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman — 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	700/500
Banana	550/550
Banana (imported)	950/750
Cabbage	70/40
Carrot	220/140
Cauliflower	250/150
Cucumber (large)	280/150
Cucumber (small)	440/250
Eggplant	150/110
Fava beans	750/500
Garlic	1150/950
Grape fruit	170/100
Lemon	380/250
Marrow (large)	220/120
Marrow (small)	360/220
Onion (green)	180/120
Onion (dry)	180/120
Orange	560/400
Peas	900/700
Pepper (hot)	400/220
Pepper (sweet)	280/150
Potato	250/180
Radish	70/40
Spinach	220/150
String beans	640/400
Tomato	150/110

Queen launches Al-Ilm Noor Fund at Tafileh, discusses possible future copper mining at reserve

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Sunday inaugurated the Buseirah Secondary School for Girls and visited Al-'Eiss Secondary School for Boys in Tafileh, a Royal Court statement said.

"Al-Ilm Noor" Student Relief Fund has provided the schools with equipment and reference books for their laboratories and libraries and has distributed clothes and school supplies among needy students from impoverished schools in the governorate.

The Queen stated that one of the fund's future goals is to empower local grassroots non-governmental organisations by helping them establish income-generating workshops for the production of school supplies to be subsequently distributed among indigent families.

Established last August on the occasion of the Queen's birthday, under the umbrella of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF), "Al-Ilm Noor Fund" identifies and provides the country's most needy students with the fees required to study during the academic year, the statement said.

Its main mission is to ensure that all students in the Kingdom, especially young girls, are given the opportunity to complete their education, a fundamental right accorded to children through the International and Arab Conventions on the Rights of the Child.

Queen Noor confers with students in Tafileh, where she inaugurated the Buseirah Secondary School for Girls and visited Al-'Eiss Secondary School for Boys (Petra photo)

According to Salwa Damen-Masri, NHF board of trustees member and fund coordinator, the fund plans to improve student nutrition and has identified, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, 60,000 students from seven governorates who are not receiving adequate nutrition.

Later, the Queen toured the Dana Nature Reserve and Village where she met with head of the World Bank's Dana Project Chris Johnson and Dana Reserve Manager Tareq Abdul Hawa.

The three discussed the ongoing debate over a proposed copper mining scheme by the Natural Resources Authority on the reserve, the statement said.

According to Mr. Johnson, "the government of Jordan and the World Bank signed an agreement in 1993 restricting copper mining activities in the reserve as the bank realised from international experience that any significant copper mining in the reserve would destroy its ecological value."

He added that copper mining in particular required "high environmental safeguards" as each million tonnes of extracted copper produces 100 million tonnes of waste.

If such environmental safeguards are not implemented, the copper mines will become a source of groundwater and surface water contamination, the statement said.

Established by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature in 1993, the ecologically rich Dana Reserve encompasses four different habitats and is home to a number of rare endangered animals and plants such as the striped hyena, the desert gazelle and cat, the Nubian ibex, the wild cypress and wild pistachio trees.

Minister of Education Munther Masri and former Minister of Social Development Salwa-Damen Masri accompanied the Queen on her visit.

Tunisian singer Lutfi Boushnaq to perform in Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — To conclude its programme on a truly "Ramadani" note, under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor, the National Music Conservatory (NMC)/ Noor Al Hussein Foundation, in cooperation with Tunis Air and Royal Jordanian, will present the renown Tunisian singer Lutfi Boushnaq, according to an NMC statement.

He will be accompanied by ten musicians in an evening of traditional and authentic Arab music followed by suhur on Tuesday, Feb. 4 at 9.00 p.m. at the Hotel Inter.Continental.

Lutfi Boushnaq boasts a versatile repertoire, yet is noted as a master in performing Nabawi praises and Muwashahat, the statement said. He is best-known to the Jordanian public for "Sarajevo", broadcast on the JTV telethon last year, upon an initiative from His Majesty King Hussein, to aid the Bosnian people.

He also sang "Lamoni Elli Gharo Minni," currently at the top of the Arab song chart.

Mr. Boushnaq is also lauded for his popular rendition of the famous Nabawi praise "Banat Su'ad" by Arab poet Ka'b Ben Zuhair, the statement added.

He will present a programme featuring Andalusian Muwashah and classical and traditional songs.

'New border post could open by end of month'

MAFRAQ (Petra) — Mafraq Governor Ahmad Lawzi Sunday announced the new Jaber border post with Syria could be opened by the end of the month.

The centre occupies eight dunums of land, cost nearly JD 12 million and took three years to build, Mr. Lawzi said. He added that the centre comprises offices for customs, public security, and other facilities.

According to Mr. Lawzi, the centre will gradually replace the Ramtha border post centre and has been supplied with basic infrastructure services such as water, electricity, a waste water treatment plant and telephone network. The facility also has large refrigerated warehouses for storing food supplies and storage areas for different goods.

It will house banks and restaurants in addition to convenience stores. There will also be a "VIP" hall and utilities.

Vehicles travelling in either direction will use the new facilities, according to Mr. Lawzi, who noted that the centre can handle up to 500 trucks simultaneously.

He said a tender has been prepared for the construction of other facilities adjacent to a long-term truck parking area. Trucks often stay temporarily at the border for several days before their drivers resume their trip.

Mr. Lawzi described the centre as a major employment-generating project which would also be beneficial to local merchants.

He also said the governor's office has supervised the planting of 30,000 fruit and forest tree saplings around the centre and work is under way to plant more trees along the highway linking the centre with Amman.

Woman files lawsuit against tabloid, charging defamation

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A woman, whose name has been withheld by authorities, has filed a lawsuit against a former editor-in-chief as well as a journalist for the weekly tabloid Al Bilad on charges of defamation and is reportedly seeking JD500,000 in damages, an official source said Monday.

Yousef Gheishan, former editor-in-chief of Al Bilad, currently holding the same position at the satiric weekly Abed Rabbo and former Al Bilad reporter, Mowafaq Kamal, currently with the weekly tabloid Shihan, were formally charged with publishing inaccurate news and slandering and tarnishing another individual's image and dignity.

According to the source, the lawsuit was filed by a married woman following the publication of her picture and a news item alleging involvement in an extramarital affair.

The item, which appeared in the Oct. 4, 1995 newspaper issue, stated the woman's name and picture as well as the name of her alleged lover, the source maintained.

"The woman considered the information scandalous and as interfering with her private life and tarnishing her name," the source maintained.

Amman Prosecutor Jamal Zou'by Monday told the Jordan Times that both journalists pleaded not guilty to the charges.

He added that when he interrogated Mr. Gheishan regarding the published material, the latter informed him that he was unable to remember the news item, and that "he was probably not editor-in-chief at that time."

"Mr. Gheishan told me that he was probably on vacation when the items were published," Prosecutor Zou'by said.

Mr. Gheishan told the Jordan Times Monday that he had submitted his resignation, during the time the material was published, and that he was working on establishing the weekly Abed Rabbo.

He also maintained that he sent a letter to the Press and Publications Department informing them of his resignation.

Mr. Gheishan further stated that he is planning to search records at the Press and Publications Department to prove that he was not the editor-in-chief when the news item was published.

He maintained that when he interrogated Mr. Kamal, the latter informed him that he published the picture and news item at the behest of the woman's husband.

Mr. Zou'by maintained that the case was referred to the Amman Court of First Instance and that the two journalists are expected to stand trial in the next few days.

Mr. Gheishan, current editor-in-chief of Abed Rabbo, is currently standing trial at the same court on two distinct charges in an unrelated case.

A lawsuit was filed against Mr. Gheishan and the responsible editor of the same newspaper, Omar Nadi, by Minister of Public Works Abdul Hadi Majali and Islamist Deputy Ibrahim Zeid Kilani who are accusing the journalists of slander.

Both journalists, who were detained for several days, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Last week, the Jordan Press Association (JPA) Council issued a strong warning of permanent expulsion from the association, criticising the performance of some weekly tabloids.

The association said that some of these tabloids were abusing press freedoms and not abiding by press ethics, thereby "tarnishing our culture, values and traditions."

Jordan Times facsimile # 696183

Lower House ratifies 36 articles of draft companies law

By Maria Bizri
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Lower House Sunday ratified 36 more of the 292 articles of a draft companies law.

The articles amended and ratified today were primarily those concerning legal obligations of partners in partnership companies. The articles make explicit measures which define relations between business partners with reference to both inter-business and intra-business activity.

Specifically the articles state that written consent by all partners is required before any partner seeks to contract or sub-contract work from outside parties. The articles also make it illegal for partners to establish a separate company which can compete with the partnership. The law has been described by the prime minister, Cabinet ministers and several deputies as a beacon for Jordan's economic future in view of the changing regional and international economic environment.

Earlier in the session, the House heard deputy comments regarding local issues, including the Ministry of Culture's recent circular, Royal pardons, food coupons and weekly publications.

The circular stipulated advance written consent before any party might stage a cultural activity but was later withdrawn by acting Minister of Culture and Minister of Youth Mohammad Daoudieh on prime ministry directives.

Deputy Ahmad Kasasbeh spoke in support of a free and responsible press which via objective criticism would further national interests. He called for an amendment to the Press and Publications Law to penalise those publications which through "irresponsible coverage" ignite sectarianism and hinder national unity.

Deputy Nazih Ammarin expressed his appreciation for the government decision to withdraw the minister of culture's "martial" circular and added that he would like to see the government display the same courage in halving the prices of bread and fodder in the Kingdom.

In response, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti stated that the government lacked the power to implement such a measure since prices are determined by market forces. He added that if importers managed to acquire the ingredients for the above-mentioned products at lower prices, the government would not object.

Mr. Daoudieh opined that the issue concerning the ministry circular had been blown out of proportion and that its retraction had been made with knowledge and approval of Minister of Culture Ahmad Qudah.

Prosecution asks for full convictions in infant trafficking case

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Amman Prosecutor Ma'moun Muneizel Monday asked the Amman Criminal Court for the full convictions of former Honorary Consul for Sri Lanka to Jordan Tawfiq Abu Khajil, a Sri Lankan national and a Lebanese citizen being tried in absentia.

These three are charged in relation to a baby sale scam involving Sri Lankan domestic help. Last week, Prosecutor Muneizel won a case, when bail was rejected for Mr. Abu Khajil.

Charges pressed against Mr. Abu Khajil include: use of forged documents, issuance of false certificates, sale of babies (illegal under a 1929 law against slavery), possession of unlicensed firearms, theft, import of illegal wireless devices, abuses of trust and forgery of a government seal.

"Mr. Abu Khajil abused and misused his trusted post, the power, authority and diplomatic immunity he enjoyed, in return for personal gain," Mr. Muneizel told the Court.

In his 56- page closing argument, the prosecutor focused on contradictory statements Mr. Abu Khajil reportedly made while testifying. "The defendant appeared tense and confused — he would say one thing, then changed his story during the testimony," Mr. Muneizel said.

In addition, he referred to the blank family books and passports which were found in the former honorary counsel's possession.

"Mr. Abu Khajil claimed to have ordered the printing of these official documents to win a bid, when in fact these documents had no repeated serial numbers which implies intent of illegal use," Mr. Muneizel charged.

Other evidence used against Mr. Abu Khajil, according to the prosecutor, include the seized illegal wireless devices, which were found in the possession of Mr. Abu Khajil, and "he himself confessed to ownership in the full knowledge that such was illegal."

Furthermore, Mr. Muneizel said in his closing argument that Mr. Abu Khajil had signed official documents knowing they carried false information.

"When the defendant was signing official papers for Sri Lankan maids wanting to give up their newborn babies for adoption, he signed their names and signed instead of the real father, and therefore he knew he was signing an official document with a forged signature," the prosecutor told the court.

Two other people are standing trial with Mr. Abu Khajil. Anourma Galondar Laji, a Sri Lankan, accused of agreeing to sell her baby for adoption and Andrea Bustani, 37, Mr. Abu Khajil's secretary, being tried in absentia, is accused of aiding and abetting him in trafficking the infants.

Mr. Abu Khajil, 57, who pleaded not guilty, was arrested on March 13, 1996, shortly after Queen Alia Airport Police stopped a Dutch couple from leaving the country with a five-month-old boy whom they believed they had adopted after paying a sum of $8,000.

The couple were found to be carrying forged documents.

According to the prosecution charge sheet, Mr. Abu Khajil, who was fired by the Colombo government subsequent to his arrest, has been buying and selling babies since 1991.

During that period, the charge sheet said, Mr. Abu Khajil allegedly sold 36 infants for a total of $250,000.

According to Mr. Muneizel, the defendant claimed under oath that the Sri Lankan government knew and approved of these "baby sale" procedures and "that Mr. Abu Khajil was only following orders."

"After contacting the Sri Lankan embassy in Baghdad, the Sri Lankan government informed the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it did not instruct Mr. Abu Khajil or anyone else to sell the new-borns," Mr. Muneizel added.

At least four Sri Lankan witnesses, said to have been key witnesses for the prosecution, have retracted their confessions and face charges of perjury.

Presiding Judge Mohammad Tarawneh postponed the case until Feb. 17, to hear Defence Attorney Ahmad Tubeishat's closing arguments.

Low pressure front from polar region to pass over Jordan

AMMAN (J.T.) — More rain and possible snow has been predicted for Monday and Tuesday as a result of a low pressure front and cold air mass originating from the north pole, the Department of Meteorology announced Sunday.

The depression, centred over northern Syria, will cause a drop in daytime temperatures and subsequent rain, beginning in the northern regions and then moving to other parts of the country.

A department official maintained that snow is expected to fall on areas 1,000 metres above sea level and affirmed that temperatures would not rise to above eight degrees Celsius on Monday and Tuesday and will drop to an estimated two degrees at night.

Rains over the past week filled 67 per cent of the total water capacity of the Kingdom's reservoirs and the total amount of water filling the reservoirs was estimated at 68 million cubic metres (mcm), an increase of about 55.5 mcm last Thursday, according to a Jordan Water Authority (JWA) official as reported by Al Ra'i daily Sunday.

The report added that the King Talal Dam, the largest in the Kingdom and with a storage capacity of 80 mcm, has now filled 53.5 mcm of its total.

The other major dams of the Kingdom are: Al Arab, Sharhabeel, Wadi Shueib and Kafrain.

What's Going On

FILM

* "Pour la peau d'un flic" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, at 8:30 p.m.

PLAY

* "A Night of Fantasy" (Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

*Plastic art by Egyptian artist Mohmmad Abdul Rahim at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Feb. 6.

* Ramdaniat exhibition from Wadi Dana Nature Reserve (silver nature jewelery, jams, dried fruits) and Jordan River Designs (JRD) ornaments (tabelcloths, candics, embroidered accessories) at JRD showroom, Jabal Amman, Frist Circle (Tel. 613081), until Feb. 10.

* Exhibition on the "Institute of the Arab World in Paris" at the French Cultural Centre, until Feb. 6.

*Works by contemporary Arab artists entitled "The New Collection" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, (Tel. 643251/2), until Feb. 27.

NEWS IN BRIEF

VTC director meets with Swiss expert

AMMAN (Petra) — Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) Director General Ali Nasrallah Sunday met with a visiting Swiss technical expert and the two discussed the establishment of a central workshop for manufacturing and maintaining equipment used in blacksmith and carpenter workshops. The workshop is to be financed through a previously announced JD 1 million Swiss grant to Jordan and implemented in about two years. Dr. Nasrallah also discussed prospects of learning from Swiss expertise in vocational training as well as the manufacturing of metal casts for industrial purposes.

Finance committee to convene today

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament's Finance and Economy Committee will today convene under the chairmanship of Abed Mousa Nahar, according to a parliamentary announcement released Sunday. It stated that the committee will pursue its discussion of the Kingdom's 1996 Customs Law.

Minister to discuss Haj arrangements

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadi is slated to address a press conference today focusing on ministry arrangements for Jordanian Muslims to perform this year's pilgrimage to Mecca (Haj). Dr. Abbadi is also expected to announce regulations concerning transportation and travel fees. accommodation in Mecca and Medina, and regulations to. be followed by pilgrims So far. the ministry has received requests by 15,000 first-time pilgrims to make the voyage this year.

PSD director meets with Brunei official

AMMAN (Petra) — Public Security Department (PSD) Director General Nasouh Muhieddin Sunday met with the Brunei Embassy's Charge D'affaires in Amman Panjarn Yunis Mahmoud. The two discussed prospects for Jordan-Brunei cooperation in security-related affairs.

French team meets with AFM officials

AMMAN (Petra) — As stipulated by a French-Jordanian agreement reached last October in Paris, a French team of experts, working here since last November to upgrade the Amman Financial Market (AFM), held meetings with officials at the AFM to review progress in the process of modernisation. The team is helping the AFM develop a system of registering transactions and transfer of ownership of various company shares. The project is part of an overall plan to upgrade the AFM and its operational system.

31 slain in Algerian massacre

ALGIERS (AFP) — Thirty-one people were slaughtered in a weekend massacre in Medea, 80 kilometres south of the Algerian capital, Algiers, the Al Watan newspaper reported Sunday.

The atrocity, the latest in a recent upsurge which has marked the Holy Month of Ramadan, was carried out by a large group of Islamic extremists who slit their victims' throats or decapitated them, the newspaper said, citing witnesses.

About 50 extremists took part in the attack, which happened around midnight Friday in the Ktiten district on the edge of the town, they said.

There was no immediate confirmation from the security forces, despite reports of a search being launched for the killers.

According to witnesses cited by the paper, one young girl survived the attack with serious bullet wounds to the stomach after she was shot while trying to escape. Her family was killed.

The killings, which followed a well-established pattern of militant violence against villagers, were the latest in a wave of Ramadan unrest that has left around 300 people dead.

But it also showed a new daring on the part of the extremists.

Previous atrocities of this kind, bearing the trademark indiscriminate throat-slitting which has marked the terror campaign, have taken place in remote villages which have little protection from the well-armed state security forces.

Friday's massacre, the worst such attack since 48 villagers were murdered in Sidi Abdul Aziz in mid-January, was the first of its kind in a main regional town.

Witnesses who telephoned the newspaper said the attackers had appeared determined to kill as many people as possible but fled as an army patrol approached.

Soldiers reportedly began combing the outlying area immediately but no arrests have been announced.

The witnesses said that the extremists forced people out of their homes, and led them, one by one, to a man whom they described as a dwarf who slashed their throats, alternately using a knife and a hatchet, decapitating some.

"We cannot continue to endure all these horrors and keep quiet about them. Public opinion must be alerted," Al Watan reported one woman caller as saying, the paper adding that she seemed on the edge of hysteria.

The Algerian government recently warned the press about reporting such atrocities, saying it could not continue to tolerate the press "playing the game of terrorist propaganda."

In a communique, the foreign ministry said some newspapers were "amplifying the number of victims and sometimes even making up terrorist acts which had not occurred."

French Foreign Minister Herve De Charette told a debate on Algeria in the French parliament last week that up to 250 people were being killed per week in the former French colony — a figure far higher than admitted by the Algerian authorities.

Algeria says that fewer than 200 people had been killed in the current wave of violence, which started on Jan. 10, the first day of the fasting month of Ramadan.

The Medea massacre is the country's bloodiest atrocity since President Liamine Zeroual made a televised address to the nation 10 days ago, blaming the current upsurge in violence on unnamed foreign forces.

Algeria's Interior Ministry meanwhile lashed out at media criticism, saying Saturday that the government could no longer tolerate the press playing "the game of terrorist propaganda."

He promised to eradicate the "criminal gangs, traitors and mercenaries" behind the terror, which he said was part of a plot to destabilise Algeria led by unnamed "foreign forces" and "Algerian personalities."

A five-year civil war in the North African country has left an estimated 500,000 people dead, mostly civilians.

It began when the military-backed regime cancelled elections that the now-banned fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win.

Hong Kong democrats condemn China's move, plan petition

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong's pro-democracy camp Sunday condemned Beijing's plan to dilute civil liberties in the territory after it returns to Chinese rule this year and planned to petition Hong Kong's future leader.

"The preparatory committee's decision will restrict Hong Kong people's rights of freedom of speech, assembly, protesting and demonstrations," Democratic Party Vice-Chairman Yeung Sum said by telephone.

The 150-member China-appointed preparatory committee, which is overseeing Hong Kong's transition to mainland rule, Saturday approved a Beijing plan to roll back civil liberties in the special administrative region after China resumes control on July 1.

The proposal would amend the territory's bill of rights ordinance and repeal a number of other laws allowing public protests and association with foreign political organisations.

Mr. Yeung said his party, which holds the most seats in Hong Kong's current elected Legislative Council, would introduce a motion in the legislature condemning the Preparatory Committee's decision.

He said they would also present a petition with more than 10,000 signatures to chief executive-designate Tung Chee-Hwa Tuesday.

Independent legislator Emily Lau urged Chinese leaders Sunday to take a more "relaxed attitude," blaming China's moves to exert more control over Hong Kong on leadership wrangling in Beijing.

"With the post-Deng Xiaoping transition still in a state of flux, apparently there are no strong leaders in Beijing who dare to take a relaxed attitude," Ms. Lau told the Hong Kong government radio.

"Consequently, they all would rather err on the side of being over-cautious. Thus, they would have maximum control," she said.

Hong Kong will return to Chinese control on July 1, ending more than a century and a half of colonial rule. Beijing has promised Hong Kong that it will maintain a high degree of autonomy and keep its capitalist way of life intact for 50 years after the handover.

Ms. Lau also called on Mr. Tung to "learn to speak for the Hong Kong people rather than to be just a mouthpiece of Beijing."

The Preparatory Committee's proposal will now go to China's National People's Congress, or parliament, for ratification.

An opinion survey published Sunday found most Hong Kong people appear to be against China's plan to roll back civil liberties.

The telephone poll, by the independent watchdog Hong Kong Policy Viewers, found 54.8 per cent of 573 respondents were against Beijing's proposal.

Indonesia bishops blame 'moral decay' for violence

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesian Catholic bishops Sunday blamed recent riots in the mainly Muslim country on "moral decay in almost all aspects of life."

"...The law is disregarded, people's basic rights are not respected...This decay can threaten the nation's unity and future," the Indonesian Bishops' Conference said in a statement.

On Thursday, rioters set fire to a church and a Chinese Buddhist temple, wrecked four other churches and looted shops and homes in Rengasdengklok, 50 kilometres east of Jakarta, over reports that an ethnic Chinese woman had insulted Muslims. Sixteen cars were also destroyed.

In December, four people were killed when a mob went on a rampage in the town of Tasikmalaya, about 200 kilometres south-east of Jakarta. Rioters, angered by reports of police brutality towards a Muslim religious teacher, set fire to shops, buildings and churches.

The bishops said in the statement that they had urged Catholics not to become alarmed over the incidents. The statement gave no other details.

Government officials said the Rengasdengklok riot apparently started after a Chinese woman complained of the noise Muslim youths made as they beat drums before dawn to summon people to eat before the start of the daylight Ramadan fast.

Newspapers reported police have arrested 20 people, including the Chinese woman and her husband, on charges of destruction of property and looting.

Ethnic Chinese, some of whom are Christians, are often resented for their relative affluence compared to ethnic Malays and are frequently the targets of mob violence in Indonesia.

About 80 per cent of Indonesia's 200 million people are Muslims, making it the world's most populous Muslim nation. Other religions recognised by the government are Catholicism Protestantism, Hinduism and Buddhism.

Political and social analysts have blamed the eruptions of violence on socio-economic tensions. Some government members have said they believed a Maoist conspiracy was involved but have provided no proof.

French hunters killed in Africa air crash

DAKAR (R) — A plane carrying French hunters back from a game park in Senegal crashed on takeoff and burst into flames, killing at least 23 of those on board, state television and airline officials said.

The son of the president of neighbouring Guinea-Bissau, the co-pilot Saturday's Air Senegal charter flight from the town of Tambacouda in the east of the West African country, was also among the dead, they added.

A total of 29 people survived. Some suffered burns and other severe injuries, but some from the middle and back of the plane emerged bloodied but comparatively unscathed after managing to scramble clear through the acrid smoke.

"The plane broke in two. That's what saved us by allowing us to get out," one told Radio France International, saying he had made his way forward towards a white light through black smoke.

The plane, a propellor-driven HS 748, was returning from Tambacouda to the former French colony's capital Dakar, 450 kilometres away. One of the engines apparently cut out just after take off.

"After taking off the aircraft crashed on the tarmac and burst into flames," one witness told Dakar Radio.

"The plane was 25 to 30 metres above the ground and the left engine, with which there had already been problems, cut out and we fell. The plane broke in two," another survivor told French radio.

"Those in the middle were lucky, they could quickly jump clear... the plane caught fire immediately... We had friends in front who were torn apart when the plane broke up," he added.

The cause of the crash was not immediately clear but survivors spoke of several hours' delay before takeoff and problems with overloading. French radio said some survivors spoke of problems with fuel quality.

Australian minister concedes republic 'inevitable'

SYDNEY (AFP) — A government minister conceded Sunday it was inevitable Australia will become a republic as Prime Minister John Howard comes under growing criticism for adopting a "go-slow" stance on the issue.

"The issue is one of getting an Australian head of state," schools, vocational education and training minister David Kemp said in a televised interview.

He did not say whether he personally supports a republic, but added: "I believe that that's where we're going as a nation.

"I think it's inevitable that we will move in that direction and we can do so in a way which will allow the constitution to achieve what Australians want without completely disrupting the processes of government."

Mr. Howard, a staunch monarchist, has promised to hold a people's convention to debate whether Australia should sever its two-century link to the British throne but media speculation suggests he wants to back out of that commitment.

However, Mr. Kemp denied Mr. Howard had adopted any "go-slow" approach to the republic, adding: "I think what the prime minister has said is that we're not going to get any change until there is a national consensus on the issue."

Mr. Kemp said schoolchildren would be taught about the Australian constitution and the blackest parts of the nation's history in a new civic education program to be announced soon.

The course would cover political history and would help young Australians understand the constitution before any change to a republic. "We've got events in this country we certainly don't want to conceal in our history," he added.

Employment and Education Minister Amanda Vanstone said the issue of a people's convention would be addressed at meeting of government MPs in Canberra Tuesday.

Asked if the notion of a 50 per cent-elected and 50 per cent-nominated convention was still the government's preferred option, Mr. Vanstone said no option should be ruled out.

"What is important is that we live up to the commitment to give Australians a say about their constitution rather than try to push them into a particular view of the prime minister's.

"We've got no intention of shoving anybody's particular view, including the prime minister's, down the throat of Australians."

Supporters of Nawaz Sharif, leader of the Pakistan Muslim League party explode fireworks on a Lahore street late Saturday. Pakistan's general election is set for Monday (Reuter photo)

Pakistan campaign ends with fireworks

LAHORE, Pakistan (R) — Pakistan's probable next prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, ended a dull election campaign amid the deafening crack of fireworks in his home city of Lahore Sunday in what looked like a victory parade.

In stark contrast to the modest crowds drawn by his main opponents in the capital of Pakistan's most populous province, Mr. Sharif sent the city's central districts into a frenzy that continued into the early hours despite steady rain.

Ousted Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, whose dismissal by President Farooq Leghari on disputed corruption charges on Nov. 5 forced elections two years early, drew only a few thousand people to her rallies Saturday, the last day of campaigning before Monday's vote.

Imran Khan, the former Pakistani cricket captain who is a national hero, drew an even more modest crowd to his final rally in Lahore, where he lives.

Imran's audience reacted enthusiastically to his appeal to elect honest politicians who would end rampant corruption, but political analysts say his Tehrik-i-Insaaf (Justice Movement) is unlikely to win more than handful of seats, if any.

Mr. Sharif, a handkerchief frequently held to his mouth against the dense and acrid smoke from fireworks set off by exuberant supporters, brought the first real excitement to an election campaign marked by apathy.

Women threw rose petals from balconies onto his open-topped vehicle as it wound through the narrow muddy streets of central Lahore, where he is a candidate.

Thousands of people, mostly young men, thronged the streets, hundreds of them following the motorcade and frequently bringing it to halt as they pressed against Mr. Sharif's car, hoping to touch him.

Mr. Sharif ended his tortuous journey through the city with a well-attended rally that outshone anything his rivals had produced.

Mr. Sharif, an industrialist whose victory would please stock markets which have revived as his election prospects blossomed, has been prime minister before.

He was dismissed on corruption charges, but the order was reversed by the Supreme Court and his government was restored briefly before losing elections to Ms. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in October 1993.

Last week, the Supreme Court upheld Mr. Leghari's dismissal of Ms. Bhutto, saying there was enough evidence of corruption and nepotism to justify sacking her.

A bitter Bhutto has hinted that she might not accept the election results if the PPP is beaten, saying her dismissal was part of a plot to drive the PPP out of politics, and accusing Mr. Leghari, a former close ally, of trying to form a "king's party" to perpetuate himself in power.

She has alleged that Mr. Leghari has done a deal with Mr. Sharif to allow the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) leader into power as part of the plot. Both men deny the charge.

Most political analysts say the PML will emerge the biggest part in the 217-seat National Assembly, but fall short of a majority.

That view was backed Sunday by a survey by the English-language daily The News, which predicted that the PML would win 79 seats, the PPP and its allies 46, with the rest scattered among small parties and independents.

It said around 12 seats would go to the Mohajir National Movement (MQM) based in the southern city of Karachi. The MQM represents Urdu-speakers who crossed from India to Pakistan when the old British Raj was partitioned on independence in 1947.

The MQM's campaign against what it calls anti-Mohajir discrimination has sparked years of violence in Karachi, Pakistan's commercial capital, in which thousands of people have been killed.

Ms. Bhutto, speaking in Lahore Saturday, took credit for ending what she called terrorism in Karachi. Most analysts say the MQM is likely to throw its weight behind the pro-business Sharif if the PML does not win an overall majority.

Meanwhile, a British newspaper has said Ms. Bhutto may seek asylum in Britain.

The Sunday Times said a deal was being secretly considered by the government in Pakistan to avoid civil unrest that could result from putting her on trial.

The newspaper quoted senior Pakistani government sources as saying the deal would be put to Ms. Bhutto if she loses Monday's elections as expected.

It said corruption charges against Ms. Bhutto and her husband Asif Ali Zardari would be dropped in exchange for her leaving the country. The alternative would be a politically sensitive trial.

Final Chechenya vote tally gives Maskhadov 59.32%

GROZNY (AFP) — Aslan Maskhadov won Jan. 27 presidential elections in Chechenya with just under 60 per cent of the vote, according to final figures announced Sunday by the Electoral Commission.

Mr. Maskhadov, 45, who was head of Chechen armed forces during the country's 21-month war with Russia, won 59.32 per cent, or 241,950 votes, Electoral Commission head Mumadi Saidayev said.

His closest rival, popular rebel warlord Shamil Basayev, garnered 23.5 per cent, or 95,841 votes.

Previous, non-definitive results had given Mr. Maskhadov 64.8 per cent of the vote.

Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, second in command to the "father" of Chechen independence, Dzhokhar Dudayev, who took over as leader following Dudayev's death in April 1996, came in third with 10.12 per cent, or 41,183 votes.

None of the other candidates exceeded the one-per cent barrier.

Some 79.4 per cent of the 513,585 registered voters took part in the election, but four per cent of voting papers were disqualified, the Electoral Commission was quoted as saying by ITAR-TASS news agency.

Mr. Maskhadov is due to take office on Feb. 10 in an inauguration ceremony in the capital, Grozny. Details of the event are still being worked out.

The first round of legislative elections that took place at the same time as the presidential poll did not manage to vote in the 63 deputies of a new Chechen parliament. A second round is scheduled for Feb. 15, Mr. Saidayev said.

Thousands march on N. Ireland's 'bloody Sunday'

LONDONDERRY (R) — Catholics prepared to march Sunday to mark the 25th anniversary of the "bloody Sunday" slaying of demonstrators by British troops that propelled Northern Ireland to unresolved conflict.

The marchers, following the same fateful route from the Catholic bogside area of Londonderry to the city's walls, will lay wreaths and add their voices to calls for a new inquiry into one of the darkest days of Northern Ireland history.

Gerry Adams, head of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) guerrillas' political wing, Sinn Fein, told sky television that "bloody Sunday is an open wound, a Sunday which never ended" and urged a reluctant British government to examine new theories about the killings.

An official 1972 investigation exonerated British paratroopers who believed that they were under fire from IRA guerrillas attached to an 80,000-strong Catholic civil rights demonstration.

British Prime Minister John Major last week called bloody Sunday a terrible tragedy but stopped far short of ordering a new investigation into the killings — a 14th man died of his wounds after the shooting.

The killings stunned the largely pro-Irish 40 per cent Catholic minority and sent outraged youths hurrying to join the IRA's continuing guerrilla campaign to end British rule and join Northern Ireland with the Irish Republic.

The 25th anniversary is being marked against a background of a new IRA guerrilla campaign, multi-party peace talks mired in divisive wrangling and fresh calls by the Irish government for Britain to listen to new evidence about the killings.

The Dublin government, Britain's partner in the search for a Northern Ireland settlement, is to collate evidence in a new book and academic study which are at variance with the 1972 findings of Lord Widgery, Britain's then chief justice.

A book by Don Mullan purports to prove that some of the dead were shot by a sniper or snipers on the walls of Northern Ireland's second city in direct contradiction of British assertions that only troops on the ground fired their guns.

Dermot Walsh, professor of law at Limerick University, said last week that some of the evidence by soldiers given directly after the shootings was never presented to the official inquiry and suggested that it had been a whitewash.

The occasion is still a rallying call for Catholics who say they are treated as second class citizens by the British government and the Protestant majority which wants the province to remain British.

But it has underlined divisions between Sinn Fein, the militant voice of Irish nationalism, and the more moderate Catholic-backed Social Democratic and Labour Party of John Hume, a tireless peace-broker based in Londonderry.

Mr. Hume repeatedly called over the weekend for a new IRA ceasefire to win entry to the Belfast peace talks for Sinn Fein but the party's spokesmen say the London government has made impossible preconditions.

Mr. Adams wants an IRA truce to win automatic entry to the talks for Sinn Fein but Mr. Major says the ceasefire must be verifiably permanent and mark a complete end to the guerrilla campaign at the heart of a conflict which has killed 3,200 people.

A Serb opposition supporter holds a torch during a anti-government rally in central Belgrade. About 60,000 supporters of the Together opposition alliance converged after dark on Republic Square for the 77th straight day of protests demanding that the government reinstates opposition victories in local elections on Nov. 17 (Reuter photo)

Serbia's protests undimmed; shootings hit Kosovo

BELGRADE (R) — Serbia's marathon mass protests against President Slobodan Milosevic showed no sign of losing steam as violence in the ethnic tinderbox of Kosovo posed a new challenge to his isolated government.

Tens of thousands of opposition supporters and students mounted separate protests in Belgrade Saturday, both in carnival mood and both demanding for a 77th day that Mr. Milosevic recognise opposition wins in November's local elections.

Fissures have been opening up within an increasingly discredited state establishment too under the relentless pressure of protests by the Zajedno (Together) Coalition.

The junior party in Mr. Milosevc's leftist coalition is openly calling for opposition election triumphs to be reinstated to defuse the crisis and traditionally pro-government figures like churchmen and army officers demand the same.

Bickering between the president's Socialist Party (SPS) and his wife's Yugoslav United Left (JUL) have prevented them from forming a government in one town even after a state court ruling sidelined the opposition's claim to victory.

The independent newspaper Dnevni Telegraf said Sunday that Zajedno convened a town council in Jagodina by itself and named executive bodies after a separate SPS-JUL council session collapsed in quarrelling over top municipal posts.

Dragan Tadic, head of Zajedno's election committee in Jagodina, was quoted by Telegraf as saying that SPS and JUL deputies would be invited to join "the legitimate Zajedno-led council session" at 10 a.m. Monday.

Jagodina was one of 14 Serbian towns, including Belgrade, where an OSCE inquiry verified that Zajedno fairly won the vote, ruling that an SPS decision to annul the outcome because of alleged "irregularities" was fraudulent.

The killing of three ethnic Albanians by Serbian police in Kosovo province Friday was a sharp reminder of the sectarian tensions that threaten to undo international peacemaking efforts across the Balkans.

The official Yugoslav News Agency Tanjug, quoting the Serbian Interior Ministry, said three Serbian policemen were wounded when three men in a car shot at them Friday. The police returned fire, killing all three men.

Tanjug said one of the dead was a commander of the clandestine Liberation Army of Kosovo and state television (RTS) said weapons were found in the car of the "outlaws."

RTS also showed arms, explosives and maps of state installations which it said were seized in police raids in the Albanian majority province over the past few days.

But Kosovo's main political party, the Democratic League of Kosovo, described the killings as part of a brutal Serbian crackdown involving dozens of arrests of humanitarian workers and political activists over the past week.

It appealed to the international community to persuade the Serbian authorities to halt "a campaign of terror".

Ever since Milosevic revoked Kosovo's autonomy in 1989 on grounds that ethnic Albanians were preparing to secede, Western analysts have warned that a local flare-up in violence *could ignite communal hatred* across the region.

Little is known about the Liberation Army of Kosovo but it has claimed attacks over the past year in which both Serbians and ethnic Albanians have been killed.

In Belgrade, the Socialists appeared increasingly divided and uncertain, with more than 1,000 schools shut by striking teachers, universities in turmoil, lawyers rallying with the students and no sign of an end to the mass protests.

The demonstrators have used various ways to maintain the carnival atmosphere of their street rallies, from fancy-dress parades to protests at which people turned up with their dogs.

"Tomorrow (Sunday) night please bring a stick with you." Zajedno co-leader Vuk Draskovic told cheering supporters, "and on top of it a placard on which you will write your wishes, and we shall read them out."

Police out in force as few Albanians dare protest

TIRANA (R) — Police were out in force Sunday as a handful of Albanians gathered at rallies to demand the dismissal of the right-wing government and compensation for savings they lost in collapsed Pyramid investment schemes.

Scores of uniformed and plain clothes police cordoned off roads leading to a soccer pitch in Tirana where a trade union rally had been due to take place.

Police officers were seen arguing with trade union boss Azem Hajdari, the student leader hailed as a hero six years ago for helping to topple the hardline Communist regime.

Witnesses said they were trying to persuade him to leave the area because he had not received permission to hold the meeting.

Mr. Hajdari supporters had urged workers and students on Saturday to stage a peaceful meeting in Tirana to voice their disapproval at the way the Democratic Party government has handled the Pyramid Scheme financial scandal.

"All come at the rally, leave behind your party differences," the union said in an invitation in the independent Koha Jone newspaper.

But few people were seen near the soccer pitch, where police broke up a Hajdari-led gathering last week before it had time to begin.

Albanians have been clearly frightened by a wave of arrests, reported beatings and intimidation since last weekend's violent protests *across the Balkan state.*

Authorities have said at least 149 people were arrested during the week on charges of instigating violence and those convicted could face minimum sentences of 15 years.

One senior opposition Socialist was mysteriously beaten up in central Tirana Wednesday by unknown assailants.

Mr. Hajdari, who co-founded the Democratic Party in 1990 and is a member of parliament, has not been threatened but he has said he could well be detained if troubles increased.

He still backs President Sali Berisha, but distanced himself from the ruling clique last year after warning against the lack of government action against dubious Pyramid schemes.

While small cracks began appearing in the dominant Democratic Party, the opposition also called rallies in the Adriatic port of Durres, 40 kilometres west of Tirana, and in the town of Lezhe *further north.*

In Durres, witnesses said up to 500 people, mainly old men, had made their way to the town soccer stadium. Uniformed and plain clothes police, in vans and on foot, were out in force but were keeping their distance.

One elderly man said there were three reasons why so few people had attended the rally. "Firstly, there were so many police outside the stadium, secondly because the Democrats here have warned people that if they demonstrate they will lose their state jobs, and thirdly, because of the arrests."

There were no immediate reports of events in Lezhe.

The poorly-attended rallies were in stark contrast to the wave of violence that swept the Balkan state last weekend when angry crowds got of control, torching government buildings and Democratic Party offices in towns in the south.

Thousands demonstrated in central Tirana last Sunday, hurling stones and clashing with riot police who broke up the protest by force.

Mr. Berisha has promised that people will receive some of the cash they invested in two failed Pyramid Schemes by next Wednesday. But it appeared most would be given bank certificates and have to wait months before seeing any of their cash. Others may get nothing back.

42 killed as Sri Lankan rebels mount fresh attack

COLOMBO (AFP) — Intense battles raged across northern and eastern Sri Lanka Sunday as Tamil Tiger rebels launched a wave of attacks against security forces, leaving at least 42 people dead, officials said.

Dozens of fighters from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) pounded the Mavadivemou army detachment in the eastern coastal district of Batticaloa, killing 13 soldiers and wounding 12, officials said.

While the attack was going on, the mostly teenaged guerrillas fired mortar bombs at the nearby sittandy army camp, the officials said killing four people including three civilians and wounding three soldiers.

"The Tigers were clearly trying to prevent reinforcements going from sittandy to Mavadivembu," a local official said by telephone. "It was a concentrated attack to outnumber the small camp."

official sources said the LTTE in their internal high-frequency radio communications spoke of having lost seven cadres during the Mavadivembu battle. There was no immediate confirmation from the LTTE.

Air force helicopter gun ships were deployed to attack suspected Tiger concentrations in the area, officials said.

The Tigers staged another major attack on the forward defence lines of the Vettilaikerni military complex in the north of the country, killing 13 soldiers and wounding four.

As the guerrillas retreated, they took arms and ammunition from their victims, the officials said.

In the north-eastern port district of Trincomalee, security forces went on the offensive, killing seven Tiger rebels and recovering four assault rifles and five grenades, officials said.

The upsurge in violence came amid a nationwide security alert for LTTE attacks ahead of the country's 49th anniversary of independence from Britain on Tuesday.

On Saturday, elite police commandos had shot dead an area leader of the LTTE identified as Arasan in the eastern village of Vellaveli and recovered two hand grenades and a pistol.

A suspected woman suicide bomber of the LTTE died after swallowing a cyanide capsure when stopped at a police check point in the capital Colombo Friday.

Suicide bombers are a trade mark of the LTTE and police have issued an alert for six Tiger suicide cadres who are believed to have infiltrated the capital to stage bomb attacks.

Afghanistan's Taleban claim gains against Shi'ite forces

KABUL (R) — Afghanistan's Taleban militia captured a district from rival Shi'ite Muslim forces west of Kabul Sunday, a Pakistan-based Afghan news service said.

The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said the Taleban had seized the Shekali district of Parwan province, 80 kilometres northwest of Kabul, from the Hezb-i-Wahdat party led by Karim Khalili.

It said Taleban warriors, adherents of rival Sunni Islam, also captured the district of Sorkhi Parsa in the same province Saturday night after meeting little resistance from the Shi'ite militia.

Mr. Khalili's faction is part of an anti-Taleban alliance led by Ahmad Shah Masood, military chief of the previous government ousted by the Taleban, and northern General Abdul Rashid Dostum.

AIP said Taleban forces were now advancing towards Shobar, on the border of the central province of Bamiyan, Mr. Khalili's main stronghold.

The Taleban's Voice of Shariat Radio said Saturday that people in the Shi'ite-populated districts of Tagab and Behsoud, in Wardak province west of Kabul, had revolted against Mr. Khalili.

"People of Behsoud and Tagab have risen against Mr. Khalili's militia and tens of his fighters have been disarmed," it said.

Behsoud is about 225 kilometres west of Kabul and 60 kilometres south of Bamiyan. There was no independent confirmation of the Voice of Shariat report.

The Taleban now appear to be threatening Bamiyan from three directions — Ghor to the west, Wardak to the south and the Ghorband Valley to the east.

The valley fell to the Taleban Friday after a former government commander changed sides. "If news of an uprising by people who are themselves Shi'ites is true, then the Taleban have a good chance of seizing Bamiyan," a military analyst said.

He said that if Bamiyan fell, the Taleban could open a new front against Gen. Dostum, already defending his northern heartland against Taleban forces pushing up the Salang Highway north of Kabul and fighting in the northwestern province of Badghis.

The Taleban, who hold more than two-thirds of Afghanistan, want to spread their strict version of Islam across the country.

Guatemala army moves on rebel military police

GUATEMALA CITY (R) — The Guatemalan army deployed troops and tanks *Saturday night around a* compound held by rebellious military police in a four-day dispute over peacetime changes in the armed forces, witnesses said.

Military policemen outside their fortified compound told a Reuters photographer that three tanks drove by the compound and soldiers shot at them and that they shot back. They said they would fight back if the army moved against them.

The military police reported no injuries but said soldiers had taken up positions around the compound in a residential district of the capital.

The confrontation marks an escalation in the military police protest which has been the first sign of military discontent over terms of a peace accord signed in December.

The military police took over their own headquarters Wednesday night demanding guarantees of severance pay when the government dissolves their entire 4,000-member unit later this year.

Military police have refused to report to work guarding banks and businesses in the capital during the protest.

According to reports by Radio Sonora the army has set up a command centre near the compound and blocked off streets in the area. The army also placed ambulances nearby.

One of three generals who tried earlier on Saturday to negotiate with the military police and who was then blocked from leaving the compound remained hostage on saturday night.

Until Saturday's army movements, the government played down the rebellion. Presidential spokesman Ricardo De La Torre called the revolt a "labour dispute."

Drastic army reductions are part of terms in the peace treaty signed Dec. 29 between the government and leftist rebels the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit, which ended 36 years of civil war.

The conflict claimed an estimated 140,000 lives in civilian casualties.

The army has played a pivotal and at times, a brutal role in political life for much of Guatemala's recent history.

Police complain the guerrillas of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit had won a better deal in the peace accords than they did. International aid will provide job training and housing assistance for ex-rebels.

U.S., Russia gear up for summit

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Facing strains over North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) enlargement and uncertainty about President Boris Yeltsin's health, the number two man in the Kremlin and the White House sit down here this week to prepare a crucial U.S.-Russian summit.

Beginning Thursday, Vice-President Al Gore and his Russian counterpart Viktor Chernomyrdin will chair a two-day session of a bilateral commission on economic and technological cooperation.

While the agenda calls for talks on space exploration, investment and joint energy projects, the two leaders will also use what officials here call their "special channel" to set the stage for the summit.

The date and venue for the meeting between Mr. Yeltsin and President Bill Clinton is "the leading topic" of the Gore-Chernomyrdin talks, a Russian diplomat said here. Mr. Clinton hopes to make progress in reassuring Russia on the NATO's enlargement at the summit by launching new arms control initiatives and reinforcing the U.S. view that a larger alliance will not be directed against Russia, officials say.

"There are a lot of issues and it really would be good to have the presidents discuss them one-on-one," a White House official said.

Topping that list is the upcoming Madrid summit in July at which NATO leaders will pick the central European countries to be admitted into the alliance. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are the frontrunners.

Russia fiercely opposes the enlargement of NATO, arguing that it will bring the defence alliance closer to its western frontier.

To address Russian security concerns, Washington hopes to begin negotiations on a new treaty on Strategic Arms Reduction (START III), that may help persuade Russian lawmakers to ratify START II.

There is speculation that the summit, initially planned for March, somewhere outside of Washington, may be moved to Moscow or to another European city to accommodate Mr. Yeltsin's fragile state of health.

But there are also concerns that holding the summit again in Moscow following last April's meeting there would draw too much attention to Mr. Yeltsin's inability to travel and fuel perceptions of him as a weak leader.

Russian diplomats here said they are still assuming that the summit will be held in the United States while White House officials noted Friday that Mr. Yeltsin was well on the road to recovery.

Mr. Clinton will meet with Mr. Chernomyrdin Friday to put the finishing touches on summit plans and underscore the Russian prime minister's good standing in Washington.

With Mr. Yeltsin recovering from a double pneumonia that followed his bypass surgery on Nov. 5, U.S. officials are again zeroing in on Mr. Chernomyrdin as a "man we can do business with."

Mr. Chernomyrdin arrives here Wednesday at the head of a large delegation that includes eight ministers, business leaders, governors and deputies.

The Russian prime minister plans to meet with U.S. lawmakers Thursday before co-chairing the work of the commission, which is expected to yield agreements on a space station, oil and gas exploration, defence conversion and financial services.

On Saturday, Mr. Chernomyrdin travels to Chicago to meet with representatives from the mid-West states and foster U.S.-Russian cooperation on a regional level.

Bulgaria's socialists seek to hang on to power

SOFIA (R) — Bulgaria's ruling Socialists, spurning 27 days of opposition street demonstrations to demand elections, said they would go ahead with plans to form a new government.

Students and the main opposition Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) vowed to intensify their protests, and disrupt road and rail links further, if the formerly Communist Socialists did hold onto power instead of opting for immediate elections.

Socialist Party leader Georgi Parvanov said in a television interview on Saturday: "I'm sure next week Bulgaria will have a new government but it is hard to predict what the future of this government will be."

He said Nikolai Dobrev, who has a mandate to form the next government, would become prime minister the 240-seat parliament approved his cabinet.

Bulgaria has had a caretaker government, unable to take action in the face of a deep economic crisis, since December when Prime Minister Zhan Videnov resigned.

Mr. Parvanov said the Socialists could count on 122 votes in parliament, an absolute majority which meant that they could win the required confidence vote.

"I think that the anti-crisis programme which is proposed by Nikolai Dobrev is quite constructive but will still need about 30 to 40 days to implement and to regain the confidence of the people," he said.

He said Bulgaria must have a government immediately to pass legislation to halt a collapse in the value of the lev, the national currency, and cope with an inflation rate which has hit 50 per cent a month and is still rising.

The Socialists say they will hold general elections, not due until December 1998, later this year but their offer has failed to satisfy the opposition, which wants the vote held now.

The Socialist Party's supreme council will hold special talks with its parliamentary deputies and coalition partners Sunday at a meeting which is expected to choose ministers for a new cabinet.

But there have been signs of party splits and a reluctance by some party members to join a new government in view of the mass opposition street demonstrations.

Thousands of opposition supporters, workers and students, blaming the Socialists for the economic collapse, have staged daily anti-government rallies to demand elections now.

Festive protesters, including entire families, pensioners and students, streamed through Sofia on Saturday, blowing horns, banging drums and carrying banners proclaiming: "I am not a slave."

"We think that victory is very close," UDF leader Ivan Kostov told the cheering throng in the square outside Alexander Nevski Orthodox Cathedral, hours before Mr. Parvanov expressed his determination to have a new Socialist government.

Several thousand udf supporters blocked road and rail links to Greece for a fourth day. Protesters burned tyres in the highway at Doupnitsa, 60 kilometres south of Sofia, as about 100 riot police stood nearby.

Mr. Kostov warned the Socialists that similar disruptions would sweep the country if they voted in a new cabinet instead of calling elections.

"The Socialists should consider this an example of what will happen if they pass a government through parliament," he said. "The Doupnitsa road and rail blockades will become nationwide actions."

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When debate is an art...

IN HIS address to a gathering of Jordanian journalists, writers, artists, publishers and poets at an iftar hosted for them on Saturday, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan responded to the ongoing debate about national identity and loyalty to the state by encouraging free and responsible dialogue. "Responsible freedom," Prince Hassan cautioned, "should not be confused with freedom from responsibility." The Crown Prince went on to add that "participatory democracy," where Jordanians would play their natural role in building a civil society, must be based on an "exchange of ideas with objectivity and cool heads."

Jordanians have all the right to initiate national debates concerning all issues facing them, including such sensitive questions as identity and loyalty, especially against the backdrop of rapid changes taking place in the Arab World, the Middle East and throughout the world. But this debate needs to be conducted in a sober and responsible manner on the basis of fundamentals which are fully and deeply ingrained in our national fabric. Foremost among these fundamentals are the equality of citizens from all ethnic and geographical backgrounds as well as the belief that nobody's loyalty to the country can be questioned without incriminating evidence to the contrary. Discussing the future of the Palestinian refugees of 1948 and displaced Palestinians of 1967 and their inalienable rights to return to their homeland or accept compensation is a natural dimension of the overall debate about our national identity. The exercise of these rights is a solemn duty that rests on the shoulders of the international community, including of course the Arab World and Israel itself, which is especially responsible, legally, politically and morally for their plight. Besides, this exercise is not mutually exclusive with the practice and objective of true loyalty to the state by all Jordanians, especially those of Palestinian origin.

In debating whatever issue we choose, we should develop no complexes about them. But, as His Majesty the King reminded us most recently, we do have to keep in mind and focus the necessity to preserve national unity and, at the same time, the goal of reaching objective conclusions — preferably even consensus — at the end of the day. As Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti also pointed out, Jordan should promote participatory democracy and national dialogue as long as they are pursued in good faith and loyalty to the country is accorded top priority. If Jordanians are not allowed to air their views and concerns in public without fear or hang-ups, many national issues would remain dormant only to explode at a future date. There is no room for paranoia as long as dialogue is responsible and motivated by good faith and dedication to the noble causes of the country.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for **Al Ra'i** Sunday criticised Jordan's attitude towards the release of Iraqi diplomats from Lebanese detention, saying that such a move tends to mar the Kingdom's relations with other Arab states. Fahed Fanek said Lebanon released the three Iraqis who had been accused of involvement in the assassination of an Iraqi opposition dissident, Taleb Suheil, who held Jordanian and Saudi passports and that only Jordan protested the release. The Jordanian protest was likely to anger the Lebanese government, which has been maintaining that the three released Iraqis enjoyed diplomatic immunity, and would also anger the Syrian government which was widely believed to have been behind Lebanon's decision to free the three diplomats, continued the writer. In addition, he said the Jordanian move was also bound to anger the Iraqi government days after Amman and Baghdad announced they were opening a new chapter of good relations between them. The writer said that the Jordanian government ought to have exercised self restraint in this matter, as it has been doing vis-à-vis the mistreatment of Jordanian citizens in Kuwaiti jails.

A WRITER for **Al Dustour** expressed belief that the time has come for Islamists and members of the Islamic Action Front who are in parliament to join the government of Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti in an expected government reshuffle later this month. Mohammad Subeihi said that such a move is inevitable if the government is concerned with getting new blood and if it wants to address major social and economic issues without strong opposition. In the writer's view, the involvement of Islamists in the government tends to weaken the parliamentary opposition to the government at a time when certain voices within the Islamic movement in Jordan have been calling for joining the government in order for them to participate in the process of protecting the country's social fabric and confronting external dangers and conspiracies. The writer said that should the Islamists and the government remove the hurdle of the one-person, one-vote election system, on which they do not see eye to eye, the road for the Islamists to join the government will be cleared.

Economic Review

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

Learning, transparency and the economies of the Gulf

THE OIL economies of the Gulf, which have long been viewed as a closed territory to institutional investors, are finally being opened. Oil, which sold in the 1970s and 1980s at $30 a barrel, enabled the Gulf countries in the past to rely almost completely on domestic oil revenue to finance their exuberant economic expansion and developmental plans.

The slump in oil prices, which started in the early 1980s with the heavy competitive underbidding of North Sea and Norwegian oil producers, the decrease in the demand for oil per capita in Western economies and the weakening of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has led many of the Gulf countries to emulate other Arab countries by seeking loans from the West. Additionally, the Gulf war caused countries such as Kuwait, a traditionally cash-rich country, to borrow heavily to finance their war debts. (Kuwait borrowed $5.5 billion after the war which were to be repaid by December last year). This year, with oil prices expected to jump to $20 a barrel, financial analysts wonder if the oil economies will return to their past practices of closing their economies to foreign capital.

The Gulf has 120 banks which are considered small by international standards, huge domestic equity markets, partly due to the privatisation drive in some of these countries, and relatively small bond markets because of social preference for equity financing and the outward flight of expatriate labour's savings: the Gulf financial market is being opened to Western financial investors.

The move, however, has necessitated that many of the banks and governments of the region be subjected to rating processes, a basic requirement for accessing international capital markets. Moody's Investor Rating Service, Standard and Poor's, and IBCA have issued a sovereign ratings for Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and several individual banks in the region.

The governments and banks of the Gulf which were used to secrecy in their dealings had to undergo close scrutiny by the rating agencies. As a result, many Gulf countries and banks were dismayed by the process and the resultant ratings. Nevertheless, the secrecy culture, in which Middle Eastern banking is usually ensconced, has finally started to dissolve; which, to say the least, is a tremendous regional boon.

Whether countries like Saudi Arabia will revert to complete reliance on their domestic capital markets in light of the increase in oil prices caused by a rise in consumer demand or will continue on their credit expansion track remains to be seen. Besides the Saudi Arabian Basic Industries Company (SABIC) which was partially financed by institutional Japanese investors, foreign investment in Saudi Arabia is relatively low. Last year, however, the Saudi government allowed foreign companies to participate in the financing of its domestic utility projects and it has been borrowing through its semi-state owned agencies to finance the broadening and diversification of its petrochemical industry. If this trend broadens and continues, major advances in the Saudi financial market and those of the Gulf states will surely follow.

Furthermore, the UAE, whose economy outperformed the rest of the region's in the last five years, may show the way to others since the economy was also the most diversified. In 1995, the real gross domestic product (GDP) of the UAE grew by 5.8 per cent in real terms, and was expected to grow, in 1996, by approximately 8 per cent. The Gulf Business magazine reports that this excellent performance was partially owed to "a liberal exchange and trade system, an outward-oriented economic strategy that stresses private sector initiative within a framework of effective regulation, extensive infrastructure investment by the government and improved confidence in domestic financial institutions."

Maybe other Arab non-Gulf countries will learn from the UAE model.

Syrian claim about deal with Israel denied by Rabinovich

By Anthony Lewis

BOSTON — The head of Syria's delegation to the peace talks with Israel says that the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin made a commitment to withdraw from all of the Golan Heights as part of a peace agreement, and that his successor Shimon Peres reaffirmed the commitment.

Walid Moualem, the Syrian ambassador to the United States, makes that among many points about the negotiations, in an interview in the Journal of Palestine Studies. His comments are an unusually detailed statement of the Syrian view.

He said that last January the talks were going so well that the two sides set a deadline of June "to close the remaining gaps," with the expectation that "by September the final document would be ready."

Then Mr. Peres called early elections, terrorist bombs struck Israel and the Syrian-Israeli negotiations were suspended.

The interviewer, Linda Butler, managing editor of the journal, asked Mr. Moualem "through what medium" Mr. Rabin had conveyed his withdrawal offer. He replied, "I prefer not to say."

But he said the offer was repeated in the negotiating room at the Wye Plantation in Maryland. "And I told Dennis Ross," the American facilitator at the talks, to "please register what the Israeli side said."

Because the aim was "a comprehensive agreement," Mr. Moualem said, the parties did not sign points agreed but deposited them with the Americans until all the issues had been resolved.

The main matters to be negotiated, apart from the Syrian demand for total withdrawal from the Golan, were security arrangements and normalisation of relations.

Itamar Rabinovich, who as Israeli ambassador in Washington played a significant part in the talks, took a very different view of what happened when I telephoned him. He has returned to a history professorship at the University of Tel Aviv.

"There was no agreement" on withdrawal, he said. "There was no commitment, there was no promise." If Mr. Moualem heard something from someone on the Israeli side, Mr. Rabinovich said, "it was not deposited with the Americans."

As for finishing an agreement by September if the talks had continued, the Israeli said, "I don't think this would have happened."

What really occurred, Mr. Rabinovich said, was that Mr. Ross and other American participants, seeking to bridge the gap, were given to understand by the Israelis that full withdrawal "was in the realm of the possible" — but only if Syria met Israel's needs on security and normalisation. And "the Israeli conditions were never met."

He called the Moualem interview "a very interesting document, the most explicit and detailed Syrian comment on these negotiations."

Mr. Moualem said Prime Ministers Rabin and Peres both "wanted to achieve a settlement with Syria, but each had his own speed and conditions." Mr. Rabin "was reluctant, suspicious, very cautious. He moved very slowly, inch by inch. When Peres became prime minister, he was in a hurry." Mr. Rabinovich said he agreed that "Rabin was too slow and Peres too quick."

On security issues, Mr. Moualem underlined Syrian rejection of Israel's proposal for a ground station in the Golan after withdrawal. "We would refuse," he said, "even if it would be manned by Americans."

On normalisation, he said totally open economic relations would not work when Syria had a per capita income of $900 a year and Israel $15,000. He said the parties had discussed "a transitional period in which we could raise our economy to the level where there can be competition without undue hardship on our society."

The interview makes clear how bleak the prospect is now for the Israeli-Syrian talks. Mr. Moualem said Syria was ready to resume them if the new Israeli government of Benyamin Netanyahu recognised "the commitments made by the previous governments." Mr. Netanyahu, who has opposed withdrawal, said only last week that the Golan was "critical to the defence of the state of Israel."

"Nothing can compensate the Syrian people for losing one inch of the Golan," Mr. Moualem said. "Not even the moon. It is a sacred cause...

"That is where we stand. The American efforts are now focused on the Palestinian track. We don't mind. We are not in a hurry."

International Herald Tribune

LETTERS

Learning from Lebanon

To the Editor:

THE ARTICLE "February shopping festival opens in Lebanon" (Jordan Times, Feb. 2, 1997) has answered my question regarding the way Lebanon could regain its tourist edge (and potentially the economic edge) over Jordan in such a short time and after so many years of war.

After 15 years of war, Lebanon still lures foreigners, in the millions, and, even though Westerners are too afraid of political violence, they are still coming.

The Lebanese seem to be a little more aggressive in their economic policies and more original in their tourist ideas: Lebanon's gross national product (GNP) is about $11 billion, twice Jordan's, the quality of their products is most often equal to that of industrial countries, population growth is relatively low, thus making any economic progress be felt directly by the same people rather than going to subsidising more people at the same rate (as in Jordan), foreigners are enthusiastic about investing there for the friendly economic climate.

On the tourism side, Casino du Liban (estimated number of visitors by 2000 is 3 million, mostly Arab) was recently reopened, the seashore is touristically well developed, Beirut's night life is alive, mountain resorts are under development, the Lebanese are more joyous and less curious. And, to top it all, with the government's assistance, 50 per cent discount on consumer goods' prices are offered for a whole month. Lebanon does not seem not to suffer from the same causes responsible for Jordan's economic sluggishness.

Jordan can make a jump-start like that to develop its tourism by focusing on the tourist and not the developer. There is no room here to talk about what needs to be done: nevertheless, the moral of my letter, I am sure, is clear to identify.

Ramzi Batarseh,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Human Rights File

Citizenship should be regulated by law, not politics

By Waleed M. Sadi

ABDUL HADI Al Majali, minister of public works and head of Al Ahd Party, triggered, in a high profile political address in Irbid few weeks ago, a stormy national debate about Jordanian nationalism and Jordanian identity.

Mr. Majali deserves to be commended for saying in public what many others in this country have been saying in private. The thrust of Mr. Majali words, however, assumed greater significance since it seems to reflect the political platform of a major political party allegedly groomed to be a state party. The fact that Mr. Majali is also a prominent cabinet member may again suggest that his thoughts reflect the thoughts of other ministers in the government. Hence, the added value of the Irbid discourse on Jordanian identity.

To start with, all Jordanians have the right to express their views freely. Even more important, Jordanians who occupy places of leadership have an added burden than rank and file citizens to express their political platform both freely and responsibly. In his dissertation on Jordanian nationality and sense of loyalty to the country, Mr. Majali raised, and rightly so, the tribal dimension and how its application may undermine contemporary manifestation of national identification with the country.

Unfortunately, this very critical dimension of the national equation was not fully articulated or taken to its logical conclusion.

The issue of tribalism is so important in the current emotionally charged debate on the one-person, one-vote election system that it calls for a greater and deeper presentation than allowed in the Irbid speech. The fact the Mr. Majali comes from a very powerful tribe in the south of the country would give his submissions on the role of tribalism in the political development of the country that much more meaningful proportion and significance.

The fact that his comments on the subject were rather made in passing may suggest that they were not his words on it. I would like to invite Mr. Majali to pronounce himself more clearly on this critical issue in the days ahead since it was raised as one of the two principal points which have a bearing on the overriding issue of Jordanian loyalty and identity.

This benign neglect, though, can be rectified in due course. Where, however, I may part company with him is over the way he addressed and treated the subject of citizenship rights and privileges of Jordanians of Palestinian origin. The main issue here is Mr. Majali's thesis on what constitutes a full Jordanian citizen with full citizenship rights and his premise that the political rights of indigenous Jordanian are to be distinguished from those belonging to first- or second-generation.

Jordanians who came from what was Palestine. This category of Jordanians was also subdivided into two parts, one for Palestinians who came to this country in 1948 and one for those who arrived in the wake of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

While I think I understand the politics of these submissions, I honestly do not comprehend their legal context. And this is where I would like Mr. Majali to articulate for us all the legal grounds for his submissions. We are, after all, a country of laws and I am sure he would be the first to concede that political positions, no matter how valid or justified they may appear on the basis of recent political developments in the West Bank, are still committed to address citizenship and national identity in a legal context.

I would readily yield to the political argument that the breaking of all legal and administrative relations, with the West Bank, the rise of Palestinian nationalism and the prospect of creating a quasi-independent Palestinian mini-state raise serious political problems for Jordan. Where I differ with Mr. Majali and like-minded Jordanians is over the need to address these issues in a legal context and not in a legal void.

While I do not wish to talk of the legal points too much, constitutional provisions cannot be overlooked when we continue the path of political reforms on citizenship and national identity. Jordan allowed itself to fall into a legal quandary when it took the 1988 political decision to "break away" from the West Bank in a clear violation of Article 1 of the Constitution. Had that political decision taken a legal expression, it would have been easier to follow the reasoning of Mr. Majali on the need to redefine Jordanian citizenship. At a time when the first article of the Constitution absolutely precludes the secession of any part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Jordan went ahead with a political decision that could not, from a strictly legal point of view, negatively affect citizenship rights of Jordanians, whoever they are, wherever they come from and irrespective of whether they are first or fifth generation Jordanians. This is not to mention the fact that many Jordanian-Jordanians trace their origin to Palestine anyway. With the exception of Jordanian tribes, the majority of the indigenous Jordanians attribute their origin to one part of the Arab world or another. I am making this point in passing, even though it is not really relevant and should not be relevant to the ongoing debate on the subject of national identity.

At a time when we, and much of the civilised world, are yielding to the necessity and logic of even dual citizenship, we need to address whatever problems we have with regard to Jordanian-Palestinian relations not only on political grounds but also on legal basis.

No political act can take away citizenship rights of people and no change in the laws can have a retroactive effect.

I fully appreciate the dilemma that Mr. Majali is concerned with, but I would like very much to see the dialogue or debate which he had started conducted in a legal context rather than in a political framework. Otherwise, we could find ourselves in the midst of legal chaos, the magnitude of which no one may foresee.

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Monday, February 3, 1997

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Jordan 40 years ago and now — more educated, more beautiful, equally hospitable

By Ronald Kirkwood

FORTY-FIVE years ago, as a new college graduate, I volunteered to work overseas with the Mennonite Central Committee, a relief agency that still has offices in Jordan. When the letter arrived telling me I was assigned to Jericho, in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. I was totally puzzled. I had heard of Jericho, but I knew nothing of the Middle East, let alone Jordan. When I asked others, I did not get much help. Either they thought I would be living in a primitive land of sand, camels and nomads or that I would be in constant danger from warring factions. But being young and naive, I looked forward to at least a very unique experience, even if it could be full of hardship and danger.

Well, it was a very unique experience indeed, but not what I expected. Instead of hardship, I found a land with history at every turn, a culture endlessly fascinating and certainly the friendliest and most hospitable people I had ever met. It was quite an education for a young farm boy, and it left an indelible impression.

I never forgot Jordan and always yearned to return, but I never expected to have the chance because of responsibilities and finances. Then I learned of fellowships offered by the American School of Oriental Research (ACOR) in Amman. I applied and was awarded a three-month fellowship.

So on Sept. 1, 1996, I found myself on a plane from Cairo to Amman. While I was much more knowledgeable than I had been 40 years before. I still did not know exactly what to expect. The Amman I remembered from 1953 was a small city, a rather provincial capital. I knew, of course, that it had changed, but I was really quite unprepared for the new Amman.

My first surprise was the beautiful Queen Alia International Airport where I was smoothly guided through customs. This was indeed a change from 1953. As I stepped outside the airport, I was refreshed by the pleasant temperature after the intense heat of Cairo. The taxi ride from the airport to ACOR was my first introduction to modern Jordan. The two-lane asphalt roads I remembered were now four-lane lighted boulevards crowded with traffic. The only thing that looked familiar was the hilly terrain and the stone buildings.

As we entered the city, I was even more amazed by the modern buildings, tree-lined boulevards, attractive shops and smooth-flowing traffic. What impressed me most, however, was the cleanliness: streets and sidewalks were virtually litter free, a condition I found repeated at the beautiful and immaculate campus of the University of Jordan. (Few U.S. cities or universities could boast this kind order). The only landmark I recognised in the new Amman was the Roman theatre, but it was much restored.

I also remembered staying at the old Philadelphia Hotel which was now housed in a beautiful new facility. Later, the management there graciously invited me to look at photographs of the old hotel, as I remembered it from 1953.

Over the next few months I continued to be impressed by the "new" Jordan. While the city seemed to function smoothly, it also seemed alive and full of optimism. Everywhere there were new buildings under construction, new shops opening, new roads being built. This spirit was not only evident in Amman, however. Travelling throughout much of Jordan, I could see progress in a country with limited natural resources.

As an educator, I was particularly interested in Jordan's educational system. I soon discovered that its educated populace was the Kingdom's main resource. The literacy rate is very high, even among the poor. I visited a number of schools and gave a lecture at two — Princess Alia Community College and the University of Jordan. Since I speak only a few phrases of Arabic, the lectures were in English. I found that the students understood me perfectly and asked many intelligent questions afterward. (American college students who are rarely bilingual should take note).

Educationally then, things had also certainly changed from 40 years before when I had taught a group of boys from the refugee camps outside of Jericho, on the West Bank.

The one thing, though, that had not changed in the 40 years since I left Jordan was the friendliness of the people. They were still as warm and hospitable as I remembered. All the guidebooks I read before leaving the States remark on this friendliness. The famous Arab hospitality to strangers is no myth. From taxi drivers to shopkeepers, from professors to government officials, I was always treated with courtesy and respect.

Before I left for Jordan I contacted a woman journalist who writes for the Wall Street Journal. She has written and travelled extensively in the Middle East. She said that I should have little difficulty working in Jordan because of its educated population, the openness of its institutions and government and the friendliness of its people. She was right on all counts.

I recall attending the coronation of His Majesty King Hussein in 1953 (I do not recall how I got invited). He was a very young man then, working against tremendous odds. Today he is highly respected throughout the world as a man of integrity and a voice of reason. He continues to lead his country into modernity without sacrificing its unique traditions. Under his leadership, the people of Jordan seem to take pride in their country, and they should. While there is still much to do, much has been accomplished. Because of their spirit, I have great faith in the people of Jordan. And I would also like to say "thank you for my memories of your country." I will fly your flag proudly, wear my Jordanian emblem on my shirt, and, "inshallah", I shall return some day to a land and people I love.

The writer is presently professor of English in East Peoria, Illinois. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

Kuwait rejects Sharia as sole source of legislation

KUWAIT (AP) — Kuwait's emir, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmed Al Sabah, turned down a request by Muslim fundamentalist lawmakers to change the constitution to make Islamic Sharia the only source for legislation in the emirate.

It was the second time the emir rejected such a petition, again saying the parliament should have patience and wait for the report of a committee appointed in 1991 to study whether Sharia laws should be the sole source of legislation.

"Our steps should be calculated so that our work is based on true insight like the Holy Koran advised," he said.

In an address broadcast Saturday night for the closing days of the Holy Month of Ramadan, Sheikh Jaber stressed that Kuwait already is guided by Islam. He said he entrusted the "heavy mission" of applying Sharia to a committee he set to study "creating our dream of being shaded by God's Sharia."

A petition by 37 of the parliament's 50 members, including several independent and pro-government legislators, urged the change in the constitution more than a week ago.

The house is the only elected body in the Gulf region, but still needs the emir's approval to debate a change in the constitution.

The parliament was elected in October. The emir rejected a similar petition submitted by 39 parliament members in 1994.

Under a 1962 constitution, Islamic Sharia laws already are a source of legislation in Kuwait but not the sole one.

Kuwait, unlike its neighbour Saudi Arabia, does not implement some of the harsher Sharia punishments like beheading for murder or amputation of limbs for repeated theft.

Well-organised and outspoken, Kuwait's Muslim fundamentalists have urged such punishments as a way to curb rising crime in the country, whose 750,000 citizens enjoy one of the world's highest per capita incomes.

They also want to see a stop to what they deem as an erosion of their traditions by a Western cultural invasion through the media.

Uproar over bid to restrict Israeli leadership to Jews

Arab Israelis, Soviet immigrants protest Likud deputy's proposal

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A right-wing member of parliament sparked an uproar Sunday by proposing that legislation be passed to ensure that only Jews can become Israel's prime minister.

Michael Kleiner of Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu's Likud Party told Israel Radio he would soon introduce a bill in the Knesset that would prevent Israeli Arabs or other non-Jewish citizens from ever acceding to the highest elected office.

Under the bill, "only a citizen meeting the requirements of the law of return and living in Israel for at least seven consecutive years prior to the elections will be able to run for the prime ministership." Mr. Kleiner said in the radio interview.

The "law of return" automatically grants citizenship to Jews who immigrate to Israel.

Mr. Kleiner said his law would amend 1995 legislation which led last year to the first direct election of Israel's prime minister, a contest won by Mr. Netanyahu over Labour leader Shimon Peres.

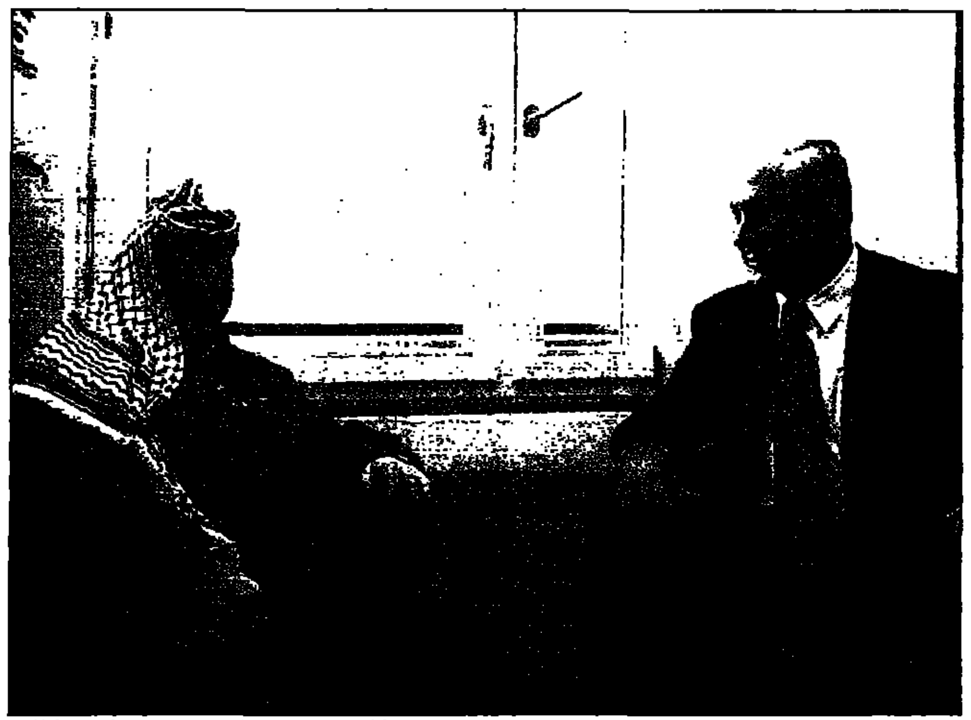
His proposal drew immediate protests from leaders of two groups directly targetted by the bill, Israel's 850,000 Arab citizens and immigrants from the former Soviet Union, many of whose Jewishness has not been recognised by Israeli religious authorities.

"This legislation will never pass because it would prevent Arab citizens from running for the state's highest office," said Azmi Bashara, an Arab member of parliament who has already declared his intention to run for the prime ministership in the next elections in 2000.

Roman Bronfman of the Russian immigrant party Israel B'aliya, which is part of Mr. Netanyahu's governing coalition, said Mr. Kleiner's proposal "stinks of racism, stupidity and bad taste.

Mr. Kleiner was undeterred by such criticism.

"In Britain the king must belong to the Anglican Church, in the United States the immigrant Henry Kissinger could not become president (because he was not American born), and only a Palestinian Arab can head the Palestinian National Authority — so only an Israeli Jew should be able to become prime minister of the Jewish state," he said.



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu meet on Sunday in Davos during the World Economic Forum (Reuters photo)

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak gestures as he speaks with Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu as they meet in Davos on Sunday during the World Economic Forum (Reuters photo)

Arafat and Netanyahu agree to discuss specifics on Thursday

(Continued from page 1)

prerequisite for luring Syria and Lebanon back into the peace process.

"Implementation of the Hebron agreement in good faith will help a lot, will help for further redeployment, will help negotiations for the final status, and will help and make the Syrians and Lebanese start thinking to continue negotiations," Mr. Mubarak said (see separate story).

The Egyptian president also said he was "keen" to visit Israel, but could not do so in the current strained environment because "I don't want to lose my credibility in my country. If I lost my credibility, it would reflect on the relations between the people of both sides."

"We would like to put an end to the wars, the hatred and bloodshed," Mr. Mubarak said.

"I hope the (Hebron) agreement is implemented in good faith. This will help the good atmosphere be created between the Israeli public and the Egyptian public," he said.

Israeli and Palestinian commanders discussed security arrangements Sunday for the reopening of a main street in Hebron closed to Palestinian traffic since 1994.

Martyrs Street, which goes through the Israeli-controlled section of Hebron, is supposed to open in stages over the next four months under an agreement reached between Israel and the Palestinians.

The first stage of the reopening is to begin Monday, whenPalestinian taxis and city vehicles will be allowed to drive alongthe street under Israeli army supervision.

Hebron settler spokesman Noam Arnon said Jewish leaders were holding an emergency meeting in response to the planned reopening.

The street — site of a former Palestinian vegetable market — runs alongside the homes of some of the city's 450 Jewish settlers.

The Israeli army, citing security reasons, closed it to Palestinian traffic after a Jewish settler shot and killed 30 Palestinians at Hebron's Ibrahimi Mosque in February 1994.

Its reopening was a central demand of the Palestinians, who said its closure was choking Hebron's economic life. Settlers claimed it would put their lives at risk.

Under a U.S.-brokered plan for reopening the street, the street will be widened and a 1.5-metre security wall will be built down the middle of a 30-metre stretch that passes by Jewish settler buildings.

Committee to campaign for release of prisoners

(Continued from page 1)

release the prisoners."

The new panel will include representatives of the families of the detainees and "influential Jordanian figures as well as nominees from the Arab Organisation for Human Rights and all other concerned organisations and associations," said Mr. Khairi.

"We have to launch a non-stop campaign to raise the issue at possible forum, including the Arab League and the United Nations as well as all human rights organisations around the world," said Mr. Khairi.

The new committee will meet on Wednesday, he said, adding that family members and all other concerned parties would be briefed by the panel every two weeks or one month.

"We hope we do not have to hold many monthly meetings because we would be seeking quick results of our actions," he said.

Emotional suggestions, mostly from relatives of the detainees, were also heard during the meeting that Jordan should refuse entry to Kuwaiti nationals and also move to close the Kuwaiti embassy in Amman in a bid to pressure the emirate's authorities to free Jordanian detainees.

But these suggestions did not appear to have been taken seriously.

Many of the relatives of prisoners produced documents attesting to their repeated efforts, since March 1991 when Kuwait was freed from Iraqi occupation, to locate their loved ones in the emirate.

In some cases, the papers showed that at least three years before the families were told that the person they were seeking was being held at a specific location.

Mahmoud Jaffrey, a leading activist on behalf of the prisoners, also told the meeting that the whereabouts of at least 40 Palestinians remained unknown and argued that they were being kept in "one or another of the dozens of secret detention centres in Kuwait."

Nida, wife of prisoner Abdul Rahman Husseini, said she had sent appeals to Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, who subsequently asked her to meet with him along with a few other representatives of the families. She said she expected the meeting to take place this week.

Kuwaitis dismiss immediate threat from Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

conducting manoeuvres in the north.

"The regime has been massing its forces for five months in the south, in a progressive manner so that they are not spotted by satellites and Western reconnaissance planes," the Iran-based Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SRIRI) said in a statement received in Dubai.

Another opposition group, the Iraqi National Congress (INC), said the Republican Guard was conducting "manoeuvres on a grand scale" in northern Iraq.

U.S. military officials last week highlighted the constant danger of a new assault on Kuwait, but the White House later played down the risk saying Iraqi troop manoeuvres were typical at this time of year.

Diplomats and some Kuwaiti analysts said Kuwaiti and U.S. officials revived concerns about Iraq as part of a strategy to justify the presence of U.S. troops in the region.

"I don't feel there is any real threat. My own feeling is Iraq is in too much of a mess" economically and politically to present an immediate danger, said Shamlan Al Essa, who teaches political science at Kuwait University.

But Mr. Essa said Kuwait probably needed to revive the issue of an Iraqi menace in a bid to "rally American support" for the emirate's defence.

"Psychologically, every six months, they (the Kuwaiti government) need the same thing," U.S. reassurance about its commitment to defend the region, he said.

But Mr. Essa said President Saddam had to be watched in the long term. "Saddam is still a crazy guy ... He still might be a threat."

Former Islamist Deputy Abdel Mohsen Jamal told the Al Qabas newspaper that the United States and other powers used President Saddam to scare Gulf states into asking for the support of the allies which seek control of the region's oil.

"The great powers will not find a better scarecrow in the region than Saddam." Mr. Jamal said.

One diplomat in Kuwait said Baghdad had shown it still has an effective military by launching an offensive in Kurdish northern Iraq last August, but added: "Invading Kuwait again is a completely different matter."

Kuwait relies heavily on U.S. naval, air and ground forces continually present in the region, although the Gulf state also has defence pacts with Britain and France.

Mahdi: Rebels open new fronts

(Continued from page 1)

Khartoum on Saturday appeared to dismiss the offer.

Government spokesman and Information Minister Brigadier Al Tayeb Ibrahim Mohammad Khair said talks were untimely, saying that Sudan's top priority was to reclaim territory captured by the rebels in the Blue Nile region.

"Dialogue is considered by the Sudanese government as a matter of principle, strategy and policy, but now the top priority is given for the liberation of the occupied territories," he said.

He said his government would agree to a ceasefire only if the rebels could prove they were not being supported by Ethiopia.

Khartoum has accused Ethiopia and Eritrea of supporting the Sudanese opposition and deploying troops on Sudan's territory. Both countries deny it.

Mr. Mahdi, who was prime minister of Sudan until the current Khartoum ruler General Omar Al Bashir overthrew him in a 1989 coup, said he supported a peaceful settlement and spoke of "many mediation efforts by several countries, both in secret and public."

Mr. Mahdi said the United States has contacts with both the opposition and the government and "are for a peaceful solution" and do "not favour a secession of the south because they want stability in the Horn of Africa."

John Garang, head of both the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the military command of the NDA, said in an interview published Sunday in Cairo that he was committed to Sudanese unity.

Oil-deal supplies expected

(Continued from page 1)

observers.

"I believe they still need to solve issues concerning their freedom of movement, logistics and what type of communications gear they are to use," he said.

He said the costs of accommodating the observers and paying for their other expenses were adding up. He did not say exactly how much Iraq would need to pay to meet their needs but he said the cost could eventually run into millions of dollars.

"They (observers) need support staff, vehicles, computers, lodging and accommodation and latest communications equipment," the diplomat said.

But he said Iraq was still keen to let the deal go through as it believed the flow of supplies on such a large-scale would ease the impact of the U.N. embargo.

More than $1.3 billion from the partial oil sales will enter Iraq's economy in the form of food and medicine in six months, relieving the government of the burden of paying about $100 million each month to subsidise the current food rations.

Private capital flow to emerging economies hits record $231 billion

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Private capital flows to emerging economies reached a record in 1996, rising 19 per cent to $231 billion from a year earlier, the International Institute of Finance has reported.

In its annual assessment, the institute said the record levels are likely to plateau in 1997 with increased equity investment compensating for slowing bond issues.

In contrast to private capital flows, net official flows fell sharply in 1996 to $7.8 billion from $43.7 billion the previous year in which Mexico called on international help to overcome the peso crisis.

The 1996 record of private investment reflects the dynamism of emerging economies and also Mexico's return to financial markets with big borrowings to finance debt repayments to the United States and the International Monetary Fund, the assessment said.

Direct private investment in stock markets and companies rose strongly, a factor which added to stability in emerging economies, said Charles Dallara, the former senior U.S. Treasury Department official who heads the institute, an association of big international banks.

These investments represented half the total of private capital flows against 30 per cent five years ago.

Asia attracted the most private capital in 1996 at 56 per cent of the total with China alone accounting for $38 billion and South Korea, calling strongly on international bond issues, attracting $36 billion.

Latin America took 29 per cent of the total, of which 40 per cent went to Brazil while emerging economies in Europe attracted $30 billion, some 13 per cent of the total.

In 1997, private capital flows will reach a plateau but with interest rates in the G-7 group of leading industrial economies expected to remain relatively low, the outlook is that capital will continue to flow towards developing countries whose economies will grow on average by 5.7 per cent, a percentage point higher than the 1993 to 1996 rate.

Growth will slow, however, in five developing countries which accounted for a third of private capital flow in 1996, the institute said.

They are Mexico, expected to slow borrowing, Brazil and Russia, whose interest rates have fallen, and Thailand and Turkey, whose fragile financial systems have made investors wary.

Equity investment in stocks and companies is expected to rise about 12 per cent in 1997, the institute said.

This could change however, depending on whether the U.S. Federal Reserve raises interest rates, which could redirect investment away from emerging markets. A one-point rate rise in the past has cut by $20 billion the capital flow to these markets in the past.

Weak growth in Europe and Japan could also hit exports in developing nations and undercut their growth while a major stock market correction in the United States could also upset investors.

Iraq reportedly will not seek IMF advice on economic recovery

AMMAN (R) — Iraq's Central Bank Governor Isam Hweish was quoted on Saturday as saying his country's economy would recover from six years of crippling U.N. sanctions without help from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Mr. Hweish, in an interview with the Jordanian newspaper Al Rai', said Iraq shared some IMF policies such as encouraging the private sector, but would not permit the fund to influence its financial policies or prevent it from subsidising commodities.

"A number of experiments, including those by Arab countries, with the International Monetary Fund have not been very successful, either in Egypt, Syria or Jordan," Mr. Hweish said.

"We have noticed exaggerated haste in economic reforms, because it is believed that time is not on the side of countries with economic problems," he said.

Mr. Hweish said that despite the U.N. sanctions, imposed on Baghdad for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, trade across its long porous borders with Jordan, Turkey and Iran helped maintain a supply of some necessary goods.

"The length of the borders has negative and positive effects. Even if we wanted to control the border areas it would not be possible, so there is widescale border trade," he said.

Mr. Hweish said Iraq's financial priorities were stability and an improved exchange rate for the Iraqi dinar, which he said had strengthened from about 2,900 to the U.S. dollar to less than half that amount since agreement on a United Nations oil-for-food deal.

Iraq has said implementation of the deal, which allows it to export $2 billion of oil every six months, is the beginning of the end of the wider trade sanctions.

"What Iraq is going through presently is a severe economic illness, but it is not a chronic illness," Mr. Hweish said. "A severely ill patient might die, but he needs less time for recuperation than a chronic patient, like Egypt and India."

"What the International Monetary Fund calls for does not achieve the desired results. We believe that Iraq, relying on its own resources can avoid much of what the International Monetary Fund calls for," he added.

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Analyse your career activities today, and if you find room for improvement, follow through with it. Avoid a disagreement with a fellow associate and you can retain some sense of harmony within the environment.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Watch your tongue in conversation today, so that there won't be any difficulty. Be very cautious driving while on the highway and avoid a possible accident. Improve your appearance any make a favourable impression.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Bring some harmony into your home today and remove anything which might destroy that balance. You can invite guests into your home later this evening and have a pleasant time with their company.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Don't daydream today while driving on the highway, and be sure to obey all laws which apply to you to avoid any difficulty. Just walk away from that boring person who is making your career activities not successful.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Gain the favour of those around you by showing today you are thoughtful of your home and family and that you can spend money wisely so that there will be some funds left around for the lean times.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Don't criticise friends today or you could find yourself alone in the world. Familiarity doesn't give you a licence to be picky. Be cautious later this evening making or changing decisions, so that you are not wishy washy.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Your mate may feel unhappy later this evening, so be thoughtful and cheerful and the mood will quickly change. Don't run off on tangents which won't make your career activities successful and prosperous.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You can seek assistance today in attaining your goals from friends who aren't confused. You may find some obstacles in your path later this evening, however if you keep a cool head you can make everything right.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) A superior you counted on for help may not be available today, so keep being persistent and you can make any situation better. Later this evening you will get assistance from fellow associates with good ideas.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You feel confident today about beginning a new enterprise, however if you don't change your present set-up, you could lose a great deal. Later this evening some knowledgeable person will be of great help to your career activities.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Make sure you keep all the promises you have made scrupulously today, or you could lose the favour of some very important person. Later this evening will be good to consult with a bigwig and use any suggestions given.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Today is not the right time to talk over a new project with a fellow associate who is not likely to agree with you. Handle your correspondence concerning your career activities and thereby make your business life more successful.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx.

Economists say global economy not immune to financial shocks

DAVOS, Switzerland (AFP) — The global economy should notch up solid growth this year but is not immune to new financial shocks nor difficulties arising from structural adjustments, economists at a global forum said here Friday.

Some of the trip-ups mentioned were the slide in the yen against the dollar, stagnation in European labour market reforms and the sickness of Japan's financial system.

U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Larry Summers warned against the risks of rejecting globalisation, while insisting there was still a need for a "strong" state to provide access to basic services such as education and health.

"Globalisation in many countries is considered to be the cause of local disintegration," he said, but the reasons "lie elsewhere" and are not tied to the growth in world trade.

"Government efforts to ensure no one is left behind are profoundly important," he said.

Horst Siebert of the Kiel Institute of World Economics said he was particularly worried by the German and French impasse over needed labour market and social security reforms. The way social security was financed — essentially by a tax on labour — destroyed jobs.

"France, for instance, is not able to change its minimum wage legislation and Germany is struggling severely to produce a tax reform. It has not even started to change its social security system," he pointed out.

If the blockage persists, it could spark a recession which would add about "800,000" to the ranks of the unemployed in the two European Union (EU) nations, Mr. Siebert said.

The German economist warned that if European monetary union embraces the southern European countries, the euro will be weak. European inflation will rise and there would be disputes on the dollar/euro exchange rate.

If that scenario prevails, the mark could fall to 1.90 against the dollar against 1.64 currently.

If monetary union remains north of the Alps — including France — then "there is a chance for a relatively stable euro", he said.

The whole project could always be postponed, he added.

Ernst-Moritz Lipp, director general of Germany's Dresdner Bank believes the debate will rage on this year over whether Italy and Spain will be among the first wave to emigrate to the euro.

"My feeling is that they will not be," which could be a let-down for financial markets, he said.

Fred Bergsten, director of the Institute for International Economics, said in contrast the euro "has a shot at becoming a strong currency from its inception", since a European central bank would push for "immediate credibility".

Mr. Bergstsen's big worry is "an excessive weakening of the yen (that) could produce a financial crisis in Japan and in the world".

He called on the finance ministers of the Group of Seven who meet on Feb. 8 in Berlin to put in place a support package to "avoid the risk of a free fall of the yen".

Japan has the dubious distinction of being the industrialised world's slowest growing economy over the past five years despite generous public spending boosts, near zero interest rates and large trade surplusses, he said.

The main culprit was the weakness of its financial system "which continues to overhang on the entire economy", the economist said.

A boost in Japanese borrowing costs could force financial institutions to liquidate some of their massive holdings around the world which could provoke a "severe reaction".

But Kosaku Inaba, president of Japan's Chamber of Industry and Commerce, said Tokyo was not suffering from a slide in the yen because of the boost in exports, which were more competitive in world markets.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 2/02/97 20:08

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.6370	0.6238	1.4235	121.35	1.3468	1612.27	1.8389	5.5325
DE Mark	0.6109	-	0.3806	0.8695	74.12	0.8222	984.29	1.1232	3.3785
GB Sterling	1.6030	2.6230	-	2.2801	194.65	2.1589	2584.47	2.9478	8.8686
CH Franc	0.7025	114.92	0.4377	-	85.23	0.9455	1131.81	129.28	3.8838
JP Yen	0.0082	1.3479	0.5133	1.1721	-	1.1089	13.28	151.41	4.5554
CA Dollar	0.7425	1.2132	0.4639	1.0566	1.11	-	1194.11	1.3626	4.1064
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0147	0.3864	0.0882	1330.32	0.8348	-	11.40	3.4294
NL Guilder	0.5438	88.99	0.3389	77.41	65.96	0.7321	876.42	-	3.0074
FR Franc	0.1808	0.2959	0.1127	25.7275	21.92	0.2434	33.24	33.2400	-

Energy

Oils	Last	Previous
Brent	23.60	24.30
W. Texas	24.10	24.75
Bony	23.60	24.30
Dubai	20.94	20.75
UL Gas	214.00	214.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2667	0.4368	0.16637	0.3799	32.3897
AE Dirham	0.2724	0.44627	0.16996	0.38809	33.0885
KW Dinar	3.3072	5.41712	2.06313	4.71032	401.606
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.34405	1.65481	3.77929	322.165
CY Pound	2.024	3.3133	1.2618	2.8812	245.612

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	344.6	345.1
Silver (oz's)	4.93	4.95
Platinum (oz's)	348.75	349.75
AL (3 Months)	1627	1629
CU (3 Months)	2187	2192
Zinc (3 Months)	1172	1174
Lead (3 Months)	672	673
NI (3 Months)	7600	7640

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Period	-1-	-3-	-6-	-9-	-1-
Ccy	Month	Months	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.46	5.37	5.50	5.62	5.75
GBP	6.12	6.19	6.56	6.50	6.50
JPY	0.53	0.53	0.46	0.59	0.59
DEM	3.00	3.00	2.88	2.94	3.00
FRF	3.09	3.24	3.26	3.24	3.28
CHF	1.37	1.50	1.56	1.68	1.62
ITL	7.42	7.26	6.93	6.80	6.68

Energy

Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	144.08	Spot
Cocoa ($/ton)	1329	Spot
Sugar ($/ton)	303.9	Spot
Wheat ($/ton)	129	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	22.26	Spot
Tea (stg/kg)	89.1	Spot
Barley ($/bsh)	2.21	Spot
Rice ($/ton)	470	Spot

*** JOD Cross Rates**

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1337	1.1394
DE Mark	0.4315	0.4337
CH Franc	0.4966	0.4991
FR Franc	0.1279	0.1285
JP Yen	0.5823	0.5852
NL Guilder	0.3842	0.3861
IT Lira	0.4387	0.4409

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

1	2	3	4	■	5	6	7	8	■	9	10	11	12	13
14				■	15				■	16				
17				18					■	19				
20									■	21				
■	■	■	22				■	23	24					
25	26	27				■	28				■	■	■	■
29					■	30				■	31	32	33	34
35				■	36					■	37			
38				■	39				■	40				
■	■	■	■	41				■	42					
43	44	45	46				■	47				■	■	■
48					■	49	50					51	52	53
54					■	55								
56					■	57				■	58			
59					■	60				■	61			

by Vivian O. Collins

ACROSS
1 Aladdin's discovery
5 Baby powder ingredient
9 Kind of television
14 Ripening factor
15 Melville novel
16 Up one's — (easy to handle)
17 Discovery
19 Carry off forcibly
20 Beaches
21 One who meditates
22 Wings of a building
23 Seesaws
25 Zoo favorites
28 Author Thomas —
29 Lotion additives
30 Tabu
31 Food fish
35 Jungle beast
36 Fender benders
37 Word with break or get
38 Confined
39 Meadow creatures
40 Improve by editing
41 Agreement
42 Inclines
43 Thin scale
47 Susceptible
48 Cooking result
49 Choosy
54 Dessert item
55 Formal written accounts
56 Maternally related
57 Dishonest person
58 Penny
59 Has nerve
60 Poetic times of day
61 Son of Enos

DOWN
1 Youths
2 Writer James —
3 "I — man with..."
4 Case used as a standard
5 Sums
6 Faulty
7 Pirate's booty
8 Fixed values, in math
9 Bizet's opera
10 Alaskan native
11 Very sophisticated
12 Tool
13 Oglers
18 Soft drinks
24 Biblical name
25 Insect feeler
26 "I cannot tell —"
27 Midday
28 French artist
30 English borough
31 Branch of linguistics
32 Range
33 Furnished
34 Finishes
36 Distribute
40 Vote into office
41 Aircraft
42 Javelins
43 Crippled
44 Sphere of conflict
45 Tooth
46 Act like a ham
47 NY city
50 PA city
51 Words of understanding
52 Outlet
53 Certain European: var.

A	R	I	A	■	P	E	T	A	L	■	C	B	E	R
C	E	N	T	■	A	B	A	C	A	■	A	R	L	O
C	A	N	T	E	R	B	U	R	Y	■	N	A	I	L
E	M	A	I	L	■	S	T	E	M	■	D	D	A	Y
P	E	T	R	O	L	■	■	S	A	H	I	B	■	■
T	R	E	E	■	A	P	E	■	N	O	D	U	L	E
■	■	■	■	■	R	O	L	L	■	L	E	R	O	T
G	A	L	■	M	A	R	B	U	R	Y	■	Y	O	O
O	M	A	H	A	■	T	O	T	O	■	■	■	■	■
D	I	N	E	R	S	■	W	E	T	■	P	U	S	S
■	■	■	S	I	X	E	S	■	C	A	R	N	O	T
L	O	B	S	■	E	C	H	O	■	D	O	R	I	A
A	R	U	T	■	D	O	O	N	E	S	B	U	R	Y
M	E	R	E	■	E	R	R	E	D	■	E	L	E	E
B	O	Y	D	■	D	E	N	S	E	■	D	Y	E	D

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Peanuts

I'VE DECIDED TO GIVE YOU A LITTLE ADVICE..
DOGS FETCH, SPEAK, ROLL OVER, SIT UP, AND PLAY DEAD..
BUT WE NEVER TAKE ADVICE..
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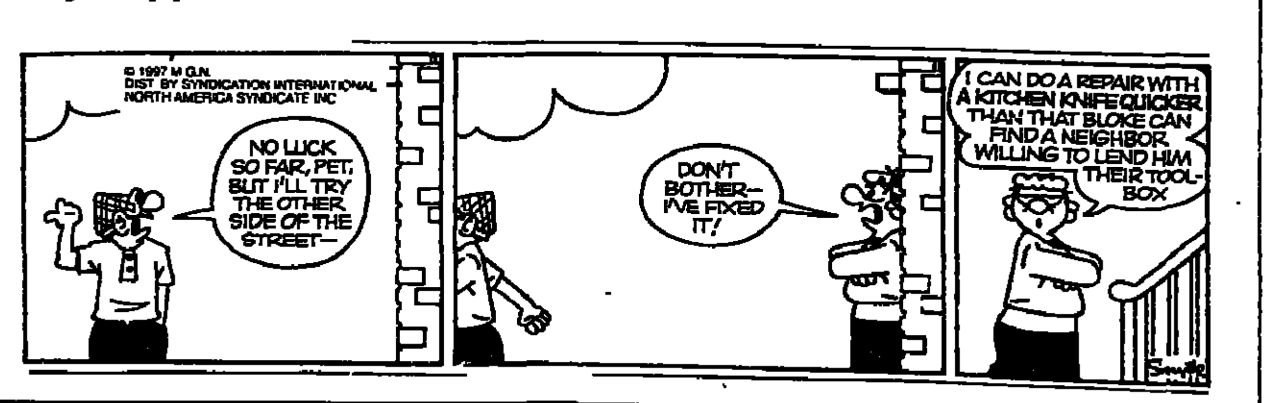
Andy Capp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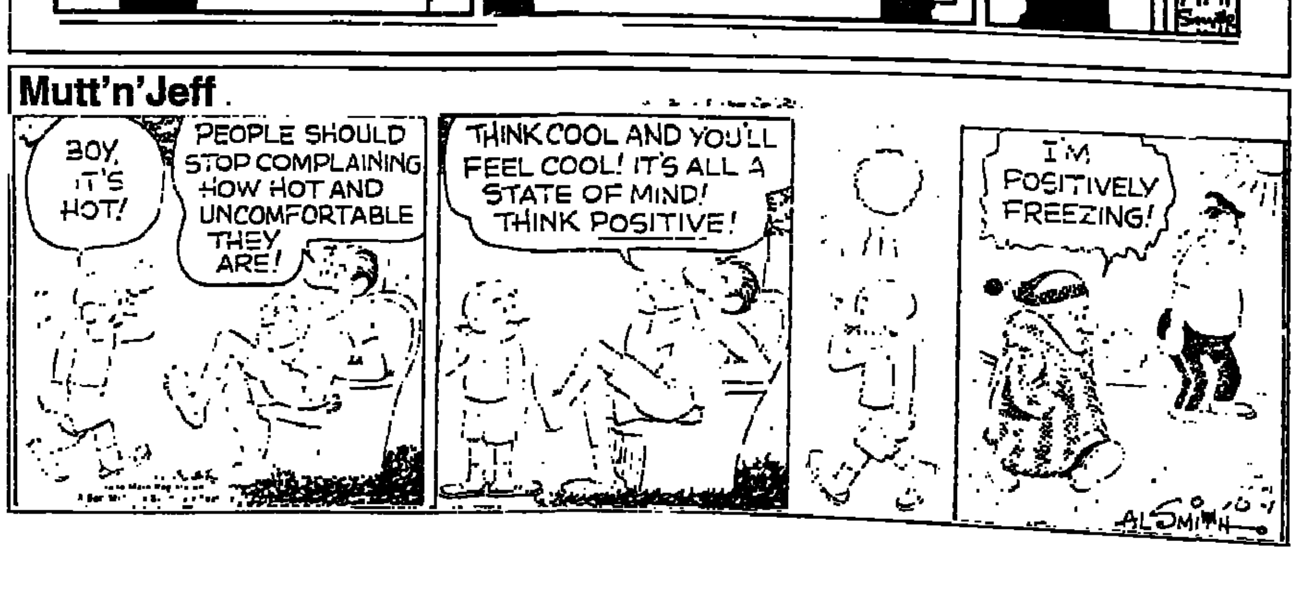
DIST BY SYNDICATION INTERNATIONAL NORTH AMERICA SYNDICATE INC
NO LUCK SO FAR, PET, BUT I'LL TRY THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET—
DON'T BOTHER— I'VE FIXED IT!
I CAN DO A REPAIR WITH A KITCHEN KNIFE QUICKER THAN THAT BLOKE CAN FIND A NEIGHBOR WILLING TO LEND HIM THEIR TOOL-BOX
Smythe

Mutt'n'Jeff


BOY, IT'S HOT!
PEOPLE SHOULD STOP COMPLAINING HOW HOT AND UNCOMFORTABLE THEY ARE!
THINK COOL AND YOU'LL FEEL COOL! IT'S ALL A STATE OF MIND! THINK POSITIVE!
I'M POSITIVELY FREEZING!
AL SMITH

French team follows up on technical progress to modernise AFM work

AMMAN (J.T.) — A delegation representing Sicovam S.A. (the French depository and settlement centre) Sunday concluded a one-week visit to Jordan. During the visit, the team followed up on the progress of implementing the technical assistance project signed recently between the Paris Bourse and Sicovam S.A. on one hand, and the Amman Financial Market (AFM) on the other.

The delegation visited a number of public shareholding companies listed at the AFM and inspected the sections responsible for maintaining the registry of shareholders. The French team examined in detail the work procedures at these sections as a prerequisite for implementing the first phase of reviewing the organisational and regulatory aspects of the AFM and depository settlement centre, and setting the technical requirement for modernisation according to the international standards in this regard.

The Sicovam delegation was joined by a team representing the Paris Bourse.

Both parties met with the project's working committee to discuss issues related to the most recent developments affecting the methodology and work procedures of the first phase of the project which started in November of 1996 and is expected to be completed within five months.

Israel cancels gas joint venture with Jordan

By Suleiman Al Khalidi
Reuters

AMMAN — Israel has formally pulled out of a joint venture with Jordan to set up a $300 million gas plant in Jordan that would have supplied the two countries with gas from the Gulf, Jordanian officials said Sunday.

"The project is non-existent...the new Israeli government is apparently not interested in the project any longer," Energy Minister Hashem Dabbas told Reuters, adding that Israel had probably opted for other sources of gas.

The deal was agreed at a Middle East economic summit two years ago amid a wave of optimism about Arab-Israeli economic cooperation. But Israel's enthusiasm for the project appeared to wane in the following months.

U.S. energy giant Enron Corp spearheaded the project to set up a $300 million regasification plant at Jordan's Red Sea port of Aqaba to bring liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the Gulf state of Qatar to Israel and Jordan in the first quarter of 2001.

Investors say the Israeli government's reluctance was based on economics. They say Israel believes getting LNG from Qatar by vessels was more expensive than other sources including direct pumping of gas from Egypt.

Israel's previous Labour government strongly lobbied for the project, despite opposition of some Israeli industrial groups, to help draw Jordan closer economically and consolidate peace.

The project grew out of an initial understanding between Enron and Israel reached in October 1995 in Amman for the supply of at least two million tonnes of Qatari gas to Israel.

Originally Israel was to get an estimated 75 per cent of gas and Jordan the remaining 25 per cent. The plant was to have taken two years to construct with the first Qatari gas deliveries to Jordan and Israel by the first quarter of the year 2001.

Dr. Dabbas said that Jordan's own letter of intent with Enron signed last March also lapsed after a 180-day period expired.

Investors say the project collapsed after Israel and Jordan failed to finalise long-term supply accords with Enron.

Jordanian investors said Enron had been notified by Israel late last year that it no longer was interested in the project.

"The Israeli government sent a letter to Enron saying that a letter of intent it signed with Enron in October 1995 was no longer binding," said an investor close to the deal.

Dr. Dabbas, however, said that Enron still had not shelved plans to set up a electric power plant in Aqaba, part of its original plan for the regasification plant.

Bureaucratic delays on the Jordanian side after Enron chose a site in Aqaba and financing problems had already added to the project's complications, investors said.

The joint venture company in which Jordanian and Israeli investors were to hold an equal 25 per cent equity share with Enron holding a 50 per cent was formally registered in Jordan and Israel but never capitalised, investors said.

The project was the largest undertaking planned so far between the Israeli and the Jordanian private investors since a peace treaty in 1994 that ended a 46-year state of war.

Investors say its collapse is a serious setback to efforts to create large private sector joint ventures between the two states that would create a common interest in preserving peace.

Smaller scale Israeli-Jordanian business ventures have been in the pipeline but the slow pace of progress in Middle East peace hindered their implementation, investors say.

Lebanon declares all-out sale to woo tourists

BEIRUT (AFP) — With a spectacular seafront firework display that lit up the skies over Beirut, Lebanon Saturday launched an all-out discount sale to lure back visitors to the war-ravaged country and breathe new life into the stagnant tourism industry.

During the "February shopping festival," businesses are offering up to 50 per cent off goods and services, and national carrier Middle East Airlines (MEA) and most hotels have been blitzed with demands for advance reservations.

"We hope the festival will finally help us get out of the terrible recession which we have been passing through for the past three years," Ali Yussef, a consultant at the economy ministry, told AFP.

Mr. Yussef said the campaign aimed to attract 150,000 visitors in February to provide a much-needed filip to the tourism sector, once a major money-spinner for the Lebanese economy.

He said the festival, due to become an annual event, would also "erase the reputation that Lebanon acquired during the past few years for being a very expensive country."

Tourism, which had begun to bloom again after the 1975-1990 civil war, slowed last year because of the Israeli military operation in April in South Lebanon that left 175 people dead, mainly civilians.

Some 386,000 tourists, mostly Arabs, visited Lebanon last year, little changed from 1995, and a fraction of the levels before the civil war.

Tourism accounted for around $710 million or eight per cent of gross domestic product in 1995, compared with 25 per cent in pre-war 1974 when some 2.4 million people visited the country.

Nizar Khoury, MEA commercial vice president, said that since the airline announced a 50 per cent discount on tickets to Beirut, all flights from the Gulf region were fully-booked until mid-February.

"We expect ticket sales to increase by 50 per cent in February," he said.

A round trip from Paris to Beirut, usually $750, is $360.

The move has also prompted foreign airlines, including Saudi Arabian Airlines, Emirates and Yemenia, to offer similar discounts.

An information centre has been set up at Beirut International Airport and 30,000 brochures issued for the event.

Trade exhibitions, art festivals, fashion shows and sports events are also on the agenda throughout the month.

Nearly all hotels, travel agencies, restaurants and shops have expressed eagerness to take part, while the media has agreed to publish or broadcast advertisements for free.

Future TV, the channel owned by Lebanon's billionaire Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, will air $12 million worth of publicity free of charge via satellite throughout the Arab World.

"Beirut hotels, with a total of 1,200 beds, are nearly empty and this is a disaster. That is why they are ready to sacrifice their prices," said Mr. Yussef.

Restaurants, where an average meal costs $25, will offer 20 per cent discounts and a special daily set menu for up to $12.

Fuad Kurban, president of the Syndicate of Travel Agencies, said he expects Lebanon's 40 car rental firms, which have a total fleet of 800 vehicles, to boost business by at least 20 per cent.

Some businesses, like jewellers and cosmetics and electrical goods shops, which cannot afford to offer such large discounts, will cut prices by between 20 and 30 per cent.

"Tourism is one of Lebanon's basic assets and we are ready to do everything to revive it," Mr. Yussef said.

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Produce prices to be floated by the end of this month

THE GOVERNMENT has started the preparatory [illegible]es to a[illegible] Ministry of Supply, a senior offi[illegible]d Al Ra'i [illegible]ed that a law to this effect will [illegible]d in May. [illegible]re, the ministry has taken the [illegible]ry steps to h[illegible]r the administration of bak[illegible] mills under its umbrella to the Armed Forces. [illegible]fer of this authority is expected over the coming few d[illegible]ys.

According to the senior official, 1997 will be the last year for distributing coupons for subsidised rice, sugar and milk supplied by the government.

He said that from the beginning of 1998, subsidies will take the form of direct cash handouts similar to the cash payments given for bread. "The Ministry of Finance will handle the payment procedures which will involve JD25 in cash per year per person for bread, rice, sugar and milk," the senior official added, noting that the beneficiaries of this handout will be the limited and low income groups.

As early as the end of this month, the ministry will begin floating the prices of 26 food items starting with fruits and vegetables to be followed by chicken. The ministry has allowed the private sector to import grains last year, and, according to an official source, the role of the private sector in this regard achieved "great success."

Asked about the fate of the Ministry of Supply, the source gave two alternatives. The first is to merge the ministries of industry and trade and supply in one ministry under one minister. However, the ministry will have two secretary generals one for industry and trade affairs and the other for supply affairs. The second alternative will be to establish an institution for grains that will own the silos and warehouses to keep a strategic supply of grains to enable the institution to interfere in the market whenever a shortage occurs or whenever prices soar beyond normal and acceptable levels.

The official concluded by stressing that before floating the prices, especially those for basic foodstuffs, the government will draw a ceiling beyond which prices will not be allowed to rise. This stage will continue until prices stabilise in line with market forces (Al Ra'i).

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 02/02/1997

PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
261.000	205.000	ARAB BANK	14.0	1.37	4	200	51170	257.00	256.00	1.00-
3.660	2.900	BANK OF JORDAN	11.4	0.00	5	4552	14219	3.25	3.17	.08-
2.680	2.120	INDUSTRIAL DEV.BK.	5.4	5.87	15	4950	11418	2.32	2.37	.05+
5.250	4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	12.7	2.91	7	10415	49468	4.69	4.75	.06+
2.950	2.440	JOR.KUWAIT BANK	19.6	0.00	7	2538	6851	2.71	2.70	.01-
1.090	.880	JOR.GULF BANK	5.7	7.29	4	15150	14544	.96	.96	-
4.180	3.480	JOR.ISLAMIC BANK	18.9	0.00	5	895	3345	3.73	3.74	.01+
1.450	1.000	PHILADEL.INV.BK.	g	0.00	6	8700	10440	1.24	1.20	.04-
		BANK SECTOR TOTALS	INDEX: 195.06	CHG: -0.23	53	47300	161454			
2.830	1.830	JOR FRENCH INSUR.	5.5	10.26	4	600	1167	1.92	1.95	.03+
		INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS	INDEX: 120.23	CHG: +0.15	4	600	1167			
1.830	1.450	JOR.ELECTRIC PWR.	11.2	7.41	10	12400	20088	1.60	1.62	.02+
1.560	1.280	IRBID ELECTRICITY	9.5	6.90	1	500	725	1.50	1.45	.05-
2.800	2.090	SHIPPING LINES	10.1	8.33	1	10000	24000	2.46	2.40	.06-
1.600	1.080	NATL. PORTFOLIO	g	0.00	12	3816	4633	1.22	1.21	.01-
1.050	.820	REAL ESTATE INV.	20.0	4.14	5	4350	3928	.89	.90	.01+
1.060	.580	JORDAN INTL.TRAD.	31.8	0.00	3	400	246	.62	.62	-
3.720	3.130	ARAB INTL.INV.EDUC.	11.8	5.71	5	2150	7465	3.50	3.50	-
1.220	.960	ZARKA EDUCATION	g	0.00	1	500	520	1.04	1.04	-
2.250	1.690	UNIFIED CO.	11.1	4.74	[illegible]	12450	26388	2.14	2.11	.03-
		SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS	INDEX: 111.76	CHG: -0.16	45	46566	83993			
1.260	.950	ATTANQEEB	g	0.00	2	1608	1528	.95	.95	-
3.730	3.060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	19.7	2.90	12	6261	21475	3.40	3.45	.05+
3.500	2.710	JOR.PHOSPHATE MINES	35.2	0.00	1	2000	6540	3.27	3.27	-
6.000	4.950	ARAB POTASH CO.	17.6	3.44	2	450	2613	5.80	5.81	.01+
10.400	8.720	JOR. PETROL.REFINARY	10.1	8.03	12	1020	10151	9.95	9.96	.01+
3.560	1.650	INDUSTRIAL COMM.AGR.	35.1	0.00	5	850	2222	2.60	2.61	.01+
4.580	3.040	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	20.0	5.48	2	250	913	3.65	3.65	-
7.350	4.250	DAR ALDAWA DV.INV.	12.4	4.34	1	400	1844	4.60	4.61	.01+
.960	.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	g	0.00	49	142450	84825	.62	.60	.02-
1.440	1.060	ARAB PAPER CONV.TRD.	8.3	8.49	1	450	549	1.22	1.22	-
1.020	.540	NATIONAL INDS.	9.9	8.96	2	1500	1005	.67	.67	-
1.540	.930	INTERMED.PETRO.CHEM.	g	0.00	2	750	825	1.10	1.10	-
3.250	2.280	UNIV.CHEM.INDS.	56.9	0.00	1	150	380	2.55	2.53	.02-
3.730	2.130	NATL.CABLE WIRE.MFAC	14.0	0.00	1	1000	2300	2.35	2.30	.05-
1.670	1.080	ARAB PHARM.CHEM.	77.1	0.00	9	10650	15547	1.45	1.45	-
3.070	1.440	UNIV. MODN.INDS.	5.2	11.76	4	2300	3911	1.72	1.70	.02-
1.930	1.140	JOR.INDS.RESOURCES	16.6	0.00	14	11582	15293	1.34	1.32	.02-
1.340	.840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	25.3	0.00	9	6150	5705	.92	.93	.01+
		INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS	INDEX: 115.74	CHG: +0.27	145	199021	191680			
		GRAND TOTAL	INDEX: 153.24	CHG: -0.02	247	293487	442294			

PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 02/02/1997

HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
.700	.440	CENTRAL GEN.STORAGE	20.1	0.00	2	1000	500	.49	.50	.01+
.790	.500	JOR.TRADE FAC.	15.5	0.00	29	74600	43701	.57	.58	.01-
.890	.700	UNION INV. 50%	68.9	0.00	3	5000	1100	.72	.72	-
.950	.370	ARAB FIN.INVEST.	[illegible]	0.00	13	19000	8550	.46	.45	.01-
+N 38.700	32.000	JOR TOURIST TRANS.CO	2.0	3.28	1	200	6100	32.00	30.50	1.50-
.640	.260	JOR.INDS.MATCH-JEMCO	g	0.00	1	500	145	.28	.29	.01+
.800	.510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	E	0.00	4	1000	613	.62	.61	.01-
1.690	1.300	NATL. CHLORINE	E	0.00	6	5750	8108	1.41	1.41	-
.690	.450	ARAB INTL.INV.TRD.	g	0.00	5	2273	1091	.48	.48	-
.860	.520	NATL. TEXTILE	g	0.00	6	4250	2338	.55	.55	-
.920	.400	NATL.MULT.ENG.NAMICO	E	0.00	10	15500	7440	.48	.48	-
.990	.720	JORDAN STEEL	E	0.00	4	2087	1585	.75	.76	.01+
.760	.620	MIDEAST PHARM. 75%	E	0.00	4	3518	1351	.63	.63	-
1.330	1.020	UNION TOBACCO 75%	E	0.00	7	3400	2652	1.03	1.03	-
.770	.570	RAZI PHARM. 65%	E	0.00	3	5750	1495	.61	.61	-
.760	.390	INDS. ENG.	27.7	0.00	8	7900	3555	.45	.45	-
.820	.590	NATL. POULTRY	E	0.00	6	3450	2559	.77	.74	.03-
.950	.530	MID.EAST COMPLEX	7.7	0.00	8	7300	4765	.66	.66	-
		GRAND TOTAL			121	162495	97662			

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Answer: ◯◯◯◯◯◯◯ ◯◯◯◯◯

(Answers tomorrow)

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Answer: Doing 100 sit-ups a day can become this – TOUGH TO STOMACH

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Jordan to host Arab Junior Weightlifting Championship

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Fourth Arab Junior Weightlifting Championship will be held here in April with 18 teams participating.

Head of the Technical Committee at the Jordan Weightlifting Federation (JWF) Azam Zubi Saturday said that the federation will try its utmost to make this championship a successful event.

" It is the first time Jordan will host this championship and we hope that we will be able to get an advanced position in the championship." Mr. Zubi told the Jordan Times .

"We have promising players who are training six days a week with the help of our Chinese coach." he added.

"This event is a vital one for our team so as to gain experience for upcoming championships." Mr. Zubi noted.

The JWF has already named the team that will represent the Kingdom in the coming event.

The junior's team consists of Hisham Amaireh, Ibrahim Madani. Ali Jabri. Mohammad Fakhri. Dawood Haboub. Mohammad Taim. Musbah Aboudi, Osama Nabil. Khaled Ayoub and Omar Taiseer.

The men's team consists of Ayed Khawaldeh. Ahmad Abu Jafar. Ahmad Fakhri, Ahmad Aboudi. Raed Taim and Awad Aboudi.

Eighteen countries were invited to attend and the JWF has set a March deadline to receive final confirmation.

Jordan received the gold medal in 1996 championship which took place in Lebanon by player Ayed Al Khawaldeh.

Like other sports federations lacking the means and financial support. Zubi said that the JWF was promised a substantial amount from the Ministry of Youth.

" We need all the support we can get. The Ministry of Youth provided us with JD15000 . and we are trying to collect the rest from people or companies who are willing to support us." he said.

The JWF revealed their 1997 plan which consists of taking part in many local and regional championships.

A busy schedule awaits the national team in 1997 as they will participate in Under-20 championship in February. Al Istiklal Championship in May. the Kingdom's Open Championship in June. the Kingdom's Professional Championship in July. the championship on the occasion of the King's Ascension to the Throne in August. the Ma'an Championship in October and a championship on the anniversary of His Majesty the King's birthday.

The championships abroad include the Saddam Championship in May and the Antalia Championship in Turkey.

PSG fail to get much-needed victory

PARIS (R) — Midfielder Cedric Daury scored a shock equaliser as Cannes held crisis-ridden Paris St. Germain 1-1 in the French First Division at the Parc Des Princes on Saturday.

PSG, who have not recorded a home win since November, remain six points adrift of leaders Monaco. who beat them 2-0 last weekend and will pull nine clear if they win at Lyon on Sunday.

Champions Auxerre climbed from seventh to fourth behind Bastia, who are at home to Strasbourg on Sunday. and 10 points behind Monaco after striker Lilian Laslandes scored in injury time to give them a 1-0 home win over Nancy.

Saturday was the lowest scoring day of the championship so far with nine goals in eight games.

Caen had defender Stephane Moreau sent off nine minutes from time for violent play at Rennes, who kept their unbeaten home record in a 1-1 draw with a 66th-minute equaliser by Laurent Huard. Macedonian Alen Bajkusa put Caen ahead in the 12th.

At the Parc Des Princes. PSG made an excellent start when striker Cyrille Pouget scored his first league goal for his new club to put them ahead in the 12th minute. volleying home a cross from Portuguese defender Kenedy.

But after half an hour PSG lost centre-back Alain Roche when he aggravated a knee injury in his first match back from a long layoff and coach Ricardo was obliged to reshuffle a defence with only one recognised central defender available. Bruno N'Gotty is also injured.

Four minutes into the second half. Jean-Jacques Etame. who had a goal disallowed for handball before the interval. launched an attack with a big kick ahead from deep in the Cannes half.

Fellow midfielder Cedric Daury chased the kick. had his first shot blocked on the edge of the box by PSG keeper Bernard Lama but knocked the ball home when it came back from the right to give the visitors a shock equaliser.

PSG camped in the Cannes half for the remainder of the match but failed to put a much needed winning goal past a packed defence despite a string of chances.

Guinean striker Aboubacar Camara scored twice as early season leaders Lens beat Guingamp 2-1 at home to end a nine-match streak without victory and climb one place to 15th.

Nantes stretched their unbeaten run in the league to 18 games with a 1-0 win at Metz. Midfielder Jocelyn Gourvenec scored one minute after the interval.

Fifth-placed Bordeaux's match at Lille kicked off nearly 20 minutes late because of a floodlighting failure. It ended 0-0.

Pankratov blows chance of 2nd world record

GELSENKIRCHEN. Germany (R) — Russia's double Olympic champion Denis Pankratov blew his chances of a second short-course world record in consecutive days with a false start in the heats of a World Cup meeting on Sunday.

Pankratov set a world record for the 200 butterfly on the first day of the meeting on Saturday and looked capable of smashing the mark for the 100 race in the discipline.

But the Russian, who was deprived of two world records in Paris last season because of an organisational blunder. was judged to have taken off from his blocks too early in what should have been a straightforward 100 heat and was disqualified.

The mistake could turn out to be costly. In addition to the $2.000 bonus swimmers earn for a world record on the World Cup circuit. Pankratov had a chance of winning a car at the Gelsenkirchen meeting.

The car is handed out to the best performance of the two-day event and a second world record would almost certainly have clinched it. But Pankratov took the mistake in his stride and was happy to laugh with reporters afterwards.

"I wanted to swim quickly this morning and I was just unlucky." he said.

Apart from Saturday. Pankratov seems to have had little luck with his record-breaking attempts in the 25-metre pool.

Almost exactly a year ago Pankratov's world records in the 100 and 200 metres butterfly at a meeting in Paris were not recognised because organisers failed to carry out drug tests.

But the Russian on Saturday clocked one minute 52.64 seconds in the 200 event to beat the previous best of 1:53.05 set by France's Franc Esposito in Paris in February 1994.

There were some fast times in the Sunday morning session of heats. Russian Nina Zhyvanevskaja set a European record for the women's 100 backstroke when she clocked 58.99 seconds.

Double Olympic champion Denis Pankratov of Russia adjusts his medal and smiles during the podium ceremony of a World Cup short course meeting in Gelsenkirchen. Pankratov set a new world record in the mens 200 metres short course butterfly. in a time of 1:52.64 minutes (Reuters photo)

Cuban heavyweight Savon suffers upset defeat

HOLGUIN. Cuba (R) — Cuba's Felix Savon. five times world amateur heavyweight champion and twice Olympic champion. was sensationally knocked out by compatriot Juan Cause Delis in the quarter-finals of the national championships.

With 24 seconds remaining in the fourth round, Savon. easily ahead on points, took a fearsome right hook square on the jaw and slumped face down on the canvas in one of the biggest upsets in amateur boxing.

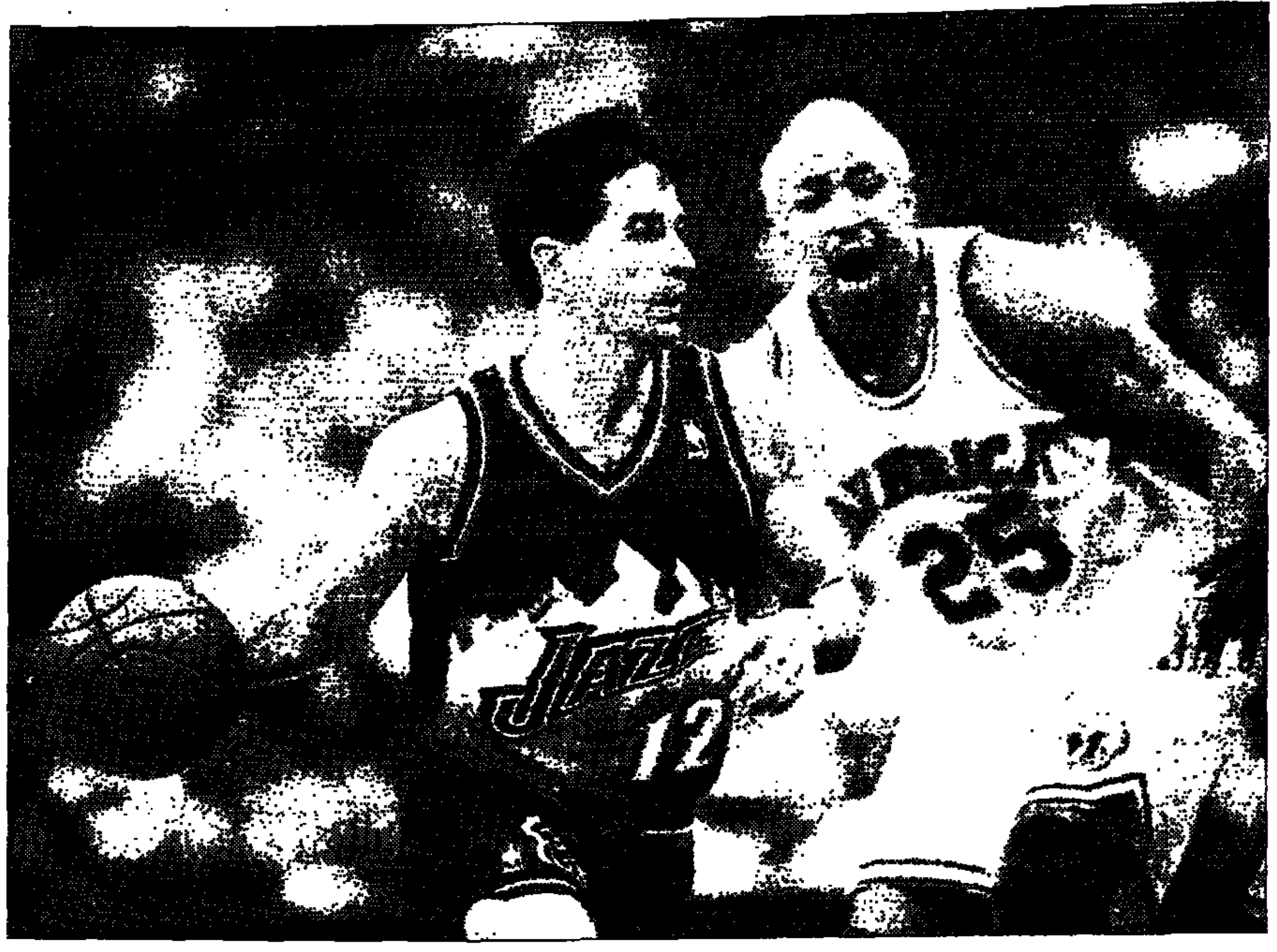
Savon, 29. was unconscious for three minutes in the ring while Delis jumped around to wild applause from the crowd of 3,000 in Friday night's bout.

Savon, who has lost just four times in the last 11 years. was attended by a Cuban team doctor at the ringside but did not require hospital treatment.

"We are keeping an eye on him but he slept well and is recovering normally." team doctor Raul Fuyaca told reporters on Saturday. "He doesn't remember the punch. but that is normal." he added.

Delis, now the only man in the world to have beaten Savon twice — the first time was in 1986 — said on Saturday he had prepared hard for the fight.

"Felix and I are good friends out of the ring and we train together. It is a friendly rivalry." he said.



Utah Jazz guard John Stockton (12) slips around Dallas Mavericks center Chris Gatling (25) before shooting in the first half of play February 1. Dallas beat Utah 100-97 (Reuters photo)

Low-scoring Cavaliers lose again as Mavs overcome Jazz

CLEVELAND (R) — Playing the Cleveland Cavaliers is like a trip to the dentist for other NBA teams. But the dentist is enjoying it even less than the patients.

Alonzo Mourning scored a modest 15 points to lead the Miami Heat to a 71-66 victory over the Cavaliers Saturday in Cleveland's latest low-speed chase.

The Cavs, who have been held to the two lowest totals in franchise history in their last two games, have lost 10 of their last 13 games. They were held to 65 points Wednesday against New York.

"We were terrible." Miami's Tim Hardaway said. "We were just terrible from the get-go. But we got the 'w' and that's all that counts. We missed wide-open shots. I missed some shots I normally make.

"It was like going to the dentist."

P.J. Brown had 12 points and 13 rebounds and Hardaway added 11 points and nine assists for the Atlantic Division-leading Heat. who set a franchise record with their 21st road win of the season. Miami. which won 14 straight road games earlier this season. has just 14 road games left.

"As long as we got more points at the end of the game. that's all that counts." Mourning said. "This ball club has been so successful on the road because we have been able to play in tough situations."

Miami did not allow more than 18 points in any period and scored 24 in the final quarter as it won its third straight game and eighth in the last 10.

"We made enough shots to win it." Miami coach Pat Riley said. "Both sides played good defence. It was a real slow game and we defended their perimeter players very well."

Terrell Brandon scored 15 points and Tyrone Hill and Bobby Phills each added 14 for the Cavaliers, who have been outscored 135-89 over their last six fourth quarters.

In Dallas, Derek Harper had season highs of 29 points and 11 assists and Chris Gatling added 19 points and 12 rebounds as the Mavericks rallied from an 11-point deficit for a 100-97 victory over the Utah Jazz, who had a five-game winning streak snapped.

Dallas won for just the third time in its last 11 games.

Karl Malone scored 36 points to lead Utah, which fell to 11-12 on the road. Malone has averaged 32.7 points in his last six games.

At New Jersey, Grant Hill scored 22 points and had his fourth triple-double of the season as the Detroit Pistons extended their winning streak to five games with a 90-75 victory over the Nets.

Hill added 11 rebounds and 11 assists for the 15th triple of his career and the second in as many weeks.

The Pistons, who have won the last eight meetings with the nets including three this season, never trailed and led by as many as 16 points in the first half.

Shawn Bradley scored 18 points and Kendall Gill 16 for the nets, who lost for the 13th time in 17 games.

In Denver, Mitch Richmond had 35 points and a career-high 13 rebounds before fouling out as the Sacramento Kings defeated the Nuggets 113-107.

Kevin Gamble scored 23 points off the bench and former Nugget Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf added 20 points for the Kings. who won for just the seventh time in 16 games.

Laphonso Ellis scored 27 points and Antonio McDyess and Ricky Pierce each added 23 for Denver.

In Los Angeles. Loy Vaught had 25 points and 13 rebounds as the Clippers overcame Golden State 110-98 despite a 40-point effort by the Warriors' Latrell Sprewell.

Rodney Rogers scored 19 points for the Clippers. who won for the fourth time in five games.

Sprewell registered his third 40-point performance this season. He hit 12-of-22 shots from the field. including five three-pointers, and made 11-of-12 free throw attempts.

The Warriors lost for the fifth time in six games.

In Milwaukee, Don MacLean scored seven of his season-high 29 points in the final three minutes, sparking the Philadelphia 76ers to a 109-100 victory over the slumping bucks.

Rookie Allen Iverson had 33 points and a season-high 14 assists and Jerry Stackhouse added 21 points for the 76ers, who are 3-3 since a 13-game losing streak.

Vin Baker had 22 points and 10 rebounds before fouling out for the Bucks, who have lost 13 of their last 19 games.

In Toronto. Walt Williams scored 33 points as the Raptors cruised to a 110-86 win over the Phoenix Suns. who dropped their sixth straight game.

Rookie Marcus Camby and Doug Christie scored 17 points apiece for the Raptors. who had lost four of their last five games. Toronto allowed just nine points in the fourth quarter in its first win ever against Phoenix.

Wesley Person scored 23 points for the Suns, who fell to 4-21 on the road.

NBA RESULTS

Detroit	90	New Jersey	75
Toronto	110	Phoenix	86
Miami	71	Cleveland	66
Dallas	100	Utah	97
Sacramento	113	Denver	107
Philadelphia	109	Milwaukee	100
LA Clippers	110	Golden State	98

Pele backs Beckenbauer for FIFA top spot

BONN (AFP) — Former Brazilian soccer star Pele is backing former German captain Franz Beckenbauer to take over as president of FIFA.

"Franz must take the job. It would be wonderful for football and a great climax to his wonderful career." said Pele in the weekly magazine Focus.

Beckenbauer was one of several names mentioned when current FIFA President Joao Havelange stunned the football world late last year by announcing he would be standing down in 1998.

Pele was also listed as a possible candidate but the Brazilian told the magazine that he did not want the job.

"I want to finish my mandate and remain as Brazilian sports minister until December 1998. And then perhaps even extend it. I do not want to become FIFA president," said Pele.

Beckenbauer has not ruled himself out of standing for the FIFA presidency but there is strong opposition to him amongst senior football administrators in both Europe and Asia.

"If people think Havelange was dictatorial. they should see Beckenbauer. He is not called the Kaiser for nothing." said one senior official recently. So far the only declared candidate is UEFA President Lennart Johannson who is believed to be close to winning the backing of the Caribbean. African and Asian confederations.

If the Swede does get the support of all three it will be enough to ensure him the post.

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Kjus, Mader look for surprises

SESTRIERE (R) — Lasse Kjus and Guenther Mader, the two men who dominated the overall Alpine Skiing World Cup last season, hope the opening race of the World Championships Monday will provide a surprise.

It may seem strange given their supremacy last year but if either man were to win the Super-G on the fast and demanding Kandahar-Banchetta piste, it would indeed count as a surprise after a frustrating time for both.

A gold medal would be something for the Norwegian, whose season has been hit by misfortune. For Austrian veteran Mader, it would break the habit of a lifetime.

Neither all-rounder has a strong world championship record and neither has won a real race this season either.

Kjus, the Olympic and 1993 world *combined champion*, won four races in 1995-96 to run away with the World Cup.

Mader won twice and finished second.

Yet Kjus took only a silver medal in the combined at the 1996 world championships in Sierra Nevada and Mader joined him on the podium, behind as usual, with a third place.

Since then, Kjus's World Cup fortunes have declined dramatically due to illness and injury while the 32-year-old Mader, plagued by off-season back injuries, has been eclipsed in the Austrian team by younger men.

Mader, five times a bronze medallist in his career and world number two for the past two seasons, finished second in the opening Super-G in Val d'Isere in December but has otherwise had little to celebrate.

The father of two — his older son is nine years old — is 11th in the world cup while kjus is 19th.

Both have had just one win this season in the combined which lacks the kudos of victory on the piste.

Sestriere might provide the breakthrough.

The Norwegian has nothing to lose, hardly any pressure and should be more relaxed than his rivals. He has also been training on the hill here since Friday.

Mader has the *veteran's pressure of* knowing these will be surely his last championships, tempered by the vast experience of a man completing 15 years of top-level skiing.

These will be the Innsbruck skier's sixth World Championships and despite six medals including an Olympic downhill bronze in 1992 he has never won gold.

Others may see to it that he never does.

There have been just two men's World Cup Super-G races this season and they have gone to Austrian Hans Knauss and France's Luc Alphand, who has also won three downhills.

Both will be front-runners again here *as will Norwegian Kjetl-Andre Aamodt*, the current World Cup leader.

Alphand, who lives just the other side of the border, can count on plenty of home support and his morale is sky-high after winning the first Super-G of his career in Laax last week. He was not even trying too hard at the time.

The Frenchman was also a junior world champion in the Italian resort in 1983 and likes the hill.

There is no official timed training on the piste, which has not been used in its current shape before.

Although Alphand has never captured a major title outside the World Cup, he will also be the man to beat in downhill and has another good chance of gold in that.

Kristian Ghedina of Italy will be the home favourite after three downhill wins, while his compatriot Peter Runggaldier has a third place in Super-G this season too.

But the Super-G is always the most open of all the disciplines and last year's champion Atle Skaardal of Norway, another veteran, was again something of a surprise.

Nebiolo says Japan, Korea support Rome bid

ROME (R) — International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) President Primo Nebiolo said Saturday that Japan and South Korea supported Rome's bid to host the 2004 Summer Olympics.

"I have returned from Korea with optimism about Rome's candidature to host the 2004 Olympics," said Nebiolo, an Italian and one of the most influential figures in world sport.

"During the Winter University Games I met various personalities in the Japanese and South Korean world of sports, industry and politics — many of whom are involved in the Olympics — and all favoured Rome's candidature," he said.

"Asia doesn't have any cities as candidates and so it is open to calm, impartial and reasonable evaluations."

The IOC will announce a shortlist of four candidates in march from the current 11 cities bidding to host the 2004 Games. The winning city will be named in September.

The 11 candidates are Rome, St Petersburg, Cape Town, Stockholm, Rio De Janeiro, San Juan, Buenos Aires, Athens, Lille, Seville and Istanbul.

Graf's jinx year continues as injury forces withdrawal

TOKYO (R) — An injured Steffi Graf pulled out from the "dream final" of the PAN PACIFIC indoor tennis tournament Sunday adding to woes that have already turned 1997 into a jinx year.

Graf, the world's top ranked woman player, withdrew with an injured left knee about an hour before the scheduled start of her much-anticipated match against teenage sensation Martina Hingis of Switzerland, the World No. 2.

Graf, of Germany, told reporters the injury, which she first suffered six months ago, flared up on a serve during her 6-1 7-5 semifinal win over Brenda Schultz-McCarthy of the Netherlands on Saturday.

Midway through the match, Graf had the knee strapped and had physiotherapy and ice treatment afterwards.

"I tried to practise this morning but even before I got on the court I knew I wouldn't be able to play," Graf said.

The tournament was played on carpet, a fast, unyielding surface which Graf said was the "worst possible for back and knee injuries".

Tournament officials said Graf's injury was a "severely aggravated patella tendon at the bottom front of the left kneecap".

Physiotherapist Kathryn Martin said it would be several days before doctors could determine the extent of the injury.

"This type of injury can clear up in a week or two or *sometimes can take longer*," Martin told reporters.

Graf plans to return to Germany immediately to get advice from her doctors.

"I just hope its not very serious," the 26-year-old Graf said. "I hope we can calm it down pretty soon."

There were loud gasps of surprise and disappointment when Graf's withdrawal was announced to the sell-out crowd which was looking forward to what was expected to be one of the highlights of women's tennis in 1997.

However no one was more disappointed than Graf, who since arriving in Japan nine days ago seemed on a comeback trail after a disastrous start to the year.

Tournament top seed Graf, who last week was knocked out of the Australian Open in the fourth round and then saw her father convicted of tax evasion, had not dropped a set in her three matches en route to the final.

Graf limped slightly when she walked on to the court for the victory presentation to the 16-year-old Hingis who appears poised to dethrone Graf as the queen of women's tennis.

"I'm really very, very sorry. I'm really very, very disappointed," a dejected Graf told the crowd which gave her lengthy, sympathetic applause.

In her victory-by-default speech, number two Hingis said she had been looking forward to a "great game".

"I'm very, very sorry for Steffi," she said.

While Graf's 1997 has so far been an "annus horribilis", Hingis can do no wrong.

The Pan Pacific victory was her third straight major title this year, adding to wins in the Australian Open and Sydney International last month, to leave her unbeaten in the women's tennis association tour in 1997.

In six meetings with Hingis, Graf has won five including the last time they met on carpet in the Chase Championship in November when the German took a rare five set match 6-3 4-6 6-0 4-6 6-0.

Martina Hingis of Switzerland shows off the winner's trophy without having to play in the final match against Steff Graf of Germany in the Pan Pacific Open women's tennis tournament in Tokyo (Reuters photo)

Steffi Graf of Germany ponders during a news conference after pulling out from the 'dream final' of the Pan Pacific women's indoor tennis tournament in Tokyo (Reuters photo)

Tomba has double-edged sword

SESTRIERE (AFP) — Alberto Tomba admitted on Sunday that being an Italian superstar would both help and hinder his bid for gold medal glory at the World Championships here.

Tomba, who is defending the slalom and giant slalom world titles he won at Sierra Nevada last year, will be the star attraction of the championships which open here on Sunday evening.

But in the first press conference of the two-week extravaganza, the 30-year-old said his fame here held advantages and disadvantages.

"It's both," he said. "It's an advantage because I know the pistes, there'll be a lot of support from the crowd and it'll be really motivating.

"But it's also a disadvantage because there's the pressure, people's expectations and this weight bearing down on your shoulders."

Such is the pressure on Tomba, the second most successful World Cup skier of all time, after the legendary Ingemar Stenmark, that he issued a plea to be left alone by press and photographers while he trains over the next week.

Lebanon beats Jordan 1-0 in friendly international

BEIRUT (J.T.) — Lebanon beat Jordan 1-0 (halftime 1-0) in a friendly soccer international on Sunday. The goal was scored by Jamal Taha in the 12th minute. The teams will play a return match in Amman next Friday as part of their preparations for the Asian World Cup qualifiers in April. Jordan will play in Group 3 alongside Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates while Lebanon is in Group 7 alongside Kuwait and Singapore.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Ivanisevic, Rusedski to clash in Croatian final

ZAGREB (R) — Defending champion Goran Ivanisevic fired his 15th ace of the match to beat Javier Sanchez of Spain Saturday for a place in the Croatian Indoor tournament final. Top seed Ivanisevic of Croatia ousted fifth-seeded Sanchez 6-2 6-4 and now faces Briton Greg Rusedski, who produced 16 aces in his surprise 6-4 6-4 victory over second seed Thomas Enqvist. "I cannot play much better than I played in the semifinals. Whatever I hit, went in," Ivanisevic said. In the other semifinal, Rusedski jumped in the air in delight after beating Enqvist, ranked 10th in the world. "I was very excited. I've beaten only one top player last year, so I was very pleased to beat Thomas," Rusedski said. "I served unbelievably well today."

Atletico lose ground with draw at Celta

VIGO (R) - Spanish champions Atletico Madrid lost more ground on Saturday in a scrappy 1-1 draw at mid-table Celta Vigo that left them 13 points behind neighbours Real who play Deportivo Coruna on Sunday. Daniel Prodan equalised from a corner 10 minutes from time after Celta's Milorad Ratkovic had put the home side ahead with a deflected shot. Prodan's joy was short-lived. He was sent off a minute from the end for a heavy foul on the edge of the area. Earlier in the second half Celta coach Fernando Castro had been given his marching orders for insulting the referee after a disputed decision.

Rangers held but Celtic fail to take advantage

GLASGOW (R) — Scottish champions Glasgow Rangers were held 0-0 at home by Hearts on Saturday but rivals Celtic failed to take advantage, losing 1-0 at Dundee united to an 89th minute goal by a former Rangers player. Gary McSwegan beat Celtic goalkeeper Stewart Kerr with a lob just six minutes after coming on as a substitute. The result left Celtic seven points adrift of at the top of the premier division with 11 games to play. Dundee United have now won their last eight matches and are third, 12 points behind Celtic. At Ibrox, the champions, chasing a record-equalling ninth consecutive league title, dominated a largely uneventful match but failed to break down a stubborn Hearts defence.

Captain Cantona rides to United's rescue

LONDON (AFP) — Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson was a relieved man after Eric Cantona came to his side's rescue with a late winner in a 2-1 victory over Southampton which kept them on top of the Premiership on Saturday.

United appeared to be heading for a draw against a determined Southampton side after failing to add to Gary Pallister's 19th minute equaliser of Egil Ostenstad's shock early goal for the visitors.

Captain Cantona, the scorer of several vital goals in United's successful title campaign last season, once again made the decisive contribution when he slid in at the far post to convert Ryan Giggs' superb cross from the left.

And Ferguson beamed: "Nobody scores more important goals than Eric — and he could have had three or four today.

Liverpool moved up to second after a Stan Collymore goal gave them a controversial 1-0 win at derby.

Derby manager Jim Smith hit out at the referee for unfairly sending off striker Darryl Powell for a second-half challenge on Norwegian Bjorn Tore Kvarme.

Furious Smith, who claimed that referee Peter Jones had not even seen Powell's tackle, called for an end to amateurism in refereeing.

Chelsea manager Ruud Gullit denied there was a rift with Gianluca Vialli after leaving the Italian striker out of the starting line-up for Saturday's 2-1 win at London rivals Tottenham. Gullit defended his decision to recall Welshman Mark Hughes in place of Vialli who scored twice in the 4-2 FA Cup win over Liverpool last Sunday.

Gullit said: "People always argue about who should play, but I can only put two in there up front and people must understand that."

Wimbledon manager Joe Kinnear said he feared his side's bubble may have burst after they were held to a 1-1 draw by Middlesbrough.

The Premiership's bottom club, who were without suspended star striker Fabrizio Ravanelli.

Everton manager Joe Royle said he was too exhausted to face the media after his side recorded their first win in seven matches with a 2-0 victory over Nottingham Forest, courtesy of goals from Duncan Ferguson and Nick Barmby.

Defeat keeps Forest in the thick of the relegation battle and caretaker manager Stuart Pearce has warned his side they must quickly get back to winning ways.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TANNAH HIRSCH

CROSSING SWORDS

East-West vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
♠ K 8 6 3 2
♡ A J 10 5
♢ A 5
♣ 7 3

WEST
♠ Q 10 7
♡ 3 2
♢ 9 7 6 2
♣ Q 9 8 2

EAST
♠ J 5
♡ 7 6
♢ K 10 8 4 3
♣ A K J 5

SOUTH
♠ A 9 4
♡ K Q 9 8 4
♢ Q J
♣ 10 6 4

The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♠	Pass	2♡	Pass
3♡	Pass	4♡	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening lead: Two of ♣

There is nothing better at the bridge table than the thrust and parry of an expert defender battling a skilled declarer. Here's an example.

With a moth-eaten five-card suit, East had no justification for competing at adverse vulnerability with a two-diamond overcall. North-South would have reached their optimum contract even if there had been interference.

West led a club against four hearts and East paused to take stock. West could not hold more than 3 or 4 points, so the only chance of defeating the contract was to find West with an entry to allow the defenders to collect two club tricks and a diamond, and hope for a trick from the majors. In an effort to reach partner, declarer won the first trick with the king of clubs and then daringly underled the ace of clubs at trick two.

In with the queen of clubs, West had no difficulty in finding the diamond shift. Declarer had little faith West was leading away from the king, so opted for another way to land the contract.

South rose with dummy's ace of diamonds, drew trumps in two rounds, ending in the closed hand, then ruffed a club. After cashing the ace and king of spades, declarer exited with a diamond.

East won the trick with the king, but did not relish the prospect of *being on lead with nothing* but minor-suit cards. Whichever suit East chose to return would allow declarer to discard a spade from hand while ruffing in dummy, thereby losing only three tricks in the minor suits.

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Advertisement

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Yeltsin, Chirac find 'common ground' in talks

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin said he had found much common ground on European security with his French counterpart Jacques Chirac after talks near Moscow Sunday which lasted an hour longer than planned. a Kremlin spokesman told reporters.

Spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky. quoted by Interfax news agency, said the extension of the talks at Novo Ogarevo. a residence west of Moscow. "shows that they were substantial." and Mr. Yeltsin was "very satisfied with the results."

After the talks. Mr. Yeltsin said that "in many areas the position of Russia and France coincides. especially concerning European problems." and he noted Mr. Chirac's "understanding" of Russia's position on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). the spokesman told reporters.

"Dozens of issues concerning the problem of European security. and Russia-NATO problems were covered." Mr. Yastrzhembsky said.

Their formal talks at Novo Ogarevo lasted one hour and 15 minutes. but the two leaders continued their discussions at a working dinner.

It was Mr. Yeltsin's first meeting with a foreign leader since his hospitalisation for double pneumonia on Jan. 8-20.

Mr. Yeltsin reiterated Russia's opposition to NATO expansion and Mr. Chirac said France understood Moscow's concerns. Mr. Yastrzhembsky said.

Mr. Chirac later told reporters that an accord with Russia on NATO enlargement may be reached even before the alliance's key July summit in Madrid.

NATO is expected to announce at the summit which former Soviet-bloc countries will be granted membership of the alliance. Poland. the Czech Republic and Hungary are tipped as frontrunners.

Russia has repeatedly warned that NATO expansion could trigger a new division of Europe. and in Switzerland on Thursday, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin said such a move would introduce "new mistrust and new contradictions."

Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Chirac focused on the prospects for a new European security architecture. and pledged to follow up on the accords reached at the Lisbon summit of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in December. Mr. Yastrzhembsky said.

They also discussed coordination in the coming months on security matters.

NATO is currently trying to work out the terms of a charter with Russia that it hopes will allay some of Moscow's fears.

Mr. Yastrzhembsky said the talks were held "in the sincere atmosphere of friendly, mutual understanding, which characterises the special Russian-French partnership."

Mr. Chirac accepted an invitation to pay an official visit to Russia on Sept. 25-27.

Mr. Yeltsin, who turned 66 on Saturday. appeared much thinner than before his recent bout of pneumonia, according to a French journalist on the scene.

The Russian leader has been largely absent from the public eye for the past seven months. and underwent a quintuple heart bypass operation in November. He was forced to cancel two international engagements due to his latest bout of ill health.

However. despite freezing temperatures he greeted Mr. Chirac outside the residence, saying: "I am happy that you took this initiative."

"It's a meeting of two presidents, two European leaders, friends and partners, tied by strategic and privileged relations." Mr. Yeltsin said.

Mr. Chirac gave Mr. Yeltsin a gift for his 66th birthday, and in return. Mr. Yeltsin gave him a traditional lacquer box and seven small volumes of the works of 19th-century Russian writer Nikolai Gogol.

French President Jacques Chirac is greeted by Boris Yeltsin on the steps of the Novo-Ogarevo a residence outside Moscow on Sunday (Reuters photo)

Lima scene calm after Japan-Peru summit

LIMA (AFP) — Talks between Japan's and Peru's leaders translated into a low profile police presence at the Japanese ambassador's home Sunday but there was no sign a dialogue to resolve the hostage crisis would soon be held.

Japan had been concerned about escalating police activity around the embassy residence where Tupac Amaru Revolutionarly Movement (MRTA) rebels hold 52 Peruvians. one Bolivian and 19 Japanese hostages.

Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's success in winning a pledge to ease police pressure on the rebels meant that the war of nerves in the exclusive San Isidro neighbourhood has been toned down to a musical war.

The rebels' revolutionary songs were drowned out by military music early Sunday, but the provocative police parades that provoked a shooting last week have been absent.

The next question is whether talks to end the 47-day crisis will be held.

Tupac Amaru rebels have insisted that they will not meet unless their demand for the release of 440 hostages is on the agenda. while President Alberto Fujimori's government has refused to discuss freeing any rebels.

Mr. Fujimori reiterated that position in Toronto, and told the Washington Post that the rebels had "implicitly" dropped their demand for a massive prisoner release.

"We convinced them they can't push the liberation of MRTA prisoners. It took a long time. but we were very patient," he told the Post in an interview published on Sunday.

But Nestor Cerpa Cartolini, the head of the 15-strong commando who took the compound on Dec. 17, denied on Saturday that there could be any talks without prisoner releases on the agenda.

"We're still at a deadend, definitely at a dead end because this is our main demand. The MRTA is not going to drop it," he said in a walkie-talkie interview.

Mr. Cerpa also told the Spanish newspapers El Pais and Vanguardia that one of the factors that led to the embassy seizure was the life sentence that his wife, Nancy Gilvonio. received for her involvement in rebel activity.

"I cannot deny that it was a great impulse, because I love her and I am aware that our children need their mother," he said. The couple have two children.

Egyptian cleric insists women should stay home

CAIRO (AFP) — A leading Muslim cleric in Egypt whose remarks last week about limiting the role of women sparked an uproar stoked the flames on Sunday by saying women should stay at home.

"Islam does not oppose the ascension of women to high offices. We agree that they can be ministers. managers or members of parliament, on condition that they do not forget their responsibilities to their husbands and children," Mufti Sheikh Nasr Farid Wassel said.

The cleric told the United Arab Emirates weekly Al Shuruk, which is to appear Monday, that his call for women not to seek positions of power because it would be against nature "was not a threat to their rights."

"The reality clearly shows that man is better able to make decisions on delicate questions and to judge things in a rational manner." Sheikh Wassel said.

According to the mufti. "nothing frees a woman from her duties at home."

Egyptian women, and some men. were up in arms after Sheikh Wassel, whose remarks can be taken as religious decrees, declared last week that women should not seek high-ranking government posts because it would be against nature.

"This is a shock." said Mahmoud Amin Al Alem, an eminent writer and editor in chief of the quarterly magazine Al Kadaya Al Fikriya (ideological issues).

"Women now fly planes. they fight in wars ... and if we are to respect them we must recognise that they are equal with men in everything, big and small." be said.

UAE court gives Filipino month to avoid execution

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates' (UAE) top court has given a Filipino convicted of murder five weeks to seek clemency from his victim's relatives or face execution. court sources said on Sunday.

The Federal Supreme Court on Saturday postponed until March 8 the death sentence against John Aquino for murdering his Indian colleague seven years ago to give him time to contact the victim's relatives. the sources said.

If the family agrees to pardon him or to be paid diyya. or blood money. he will be saved from execution. a court source said.

"It will then be up to the court to decide whether to keep him in jail or release him immediately in return for a token fine."

Aquino. in his 20s. pleaded guilty to killing Harbajan Singh and injuring another Indian colleague with a kitchen knife during a drinking spree in 1989. He insisted it was self-defence, saying he felt threatened by the two Indians.

The supreme court began hearing Aquino's case on Dec. 28 after he was sentenced to death by a lower court and an appeal was rejected by another court.

In a letter to the supreme court in December, the victim's Sikh relatives demanded that Aquino be executed. But Aquino's defence requested time to locate the relatives in a bid to persuade them to drop their demand.

Court sources said Singh's next of kin were residing in Britain.

"They are not Muslims and it appears they do not know about such matters. They might think they have to ask for the death punishment." a source said.

"The lawyer could contact them and explain the matter. They should know they can save a man from death if they accept the diyya ... They could also cancel their request for that penalty even if they do not want diyya."

The Philippines government has asked its ambassador in Abu Dhabi, Roy Seneres, to do his best to save Aquino.

Mr. Seneres or his aides have been present in court but none of them was immediately available for comment on Saturday's court decision.

In a similar case a few years ago, a convicted Filipino murderer in Abu Dhabi was spared the death penalty when his victim's relatives accepted blood money raised by the Philippines embassy and Filipinos living in the UAE.

Little cheer for Iraq's fragmented opposition

By Dominic Evans
Reuter

AMMAN — Iraqi dissidents and opposition groups were united in welcoming U.S. reports last week that President Saddam Hussein faces a serious power struggle in Baghdad.

They all agree President Saddam must go.

But beyond a common goal of toppling the man who has led Iraq for quarter of a century, through two disastrous wars and six years of crippling sanctions, the opposition has little to unite it. Geographically and ideologically it is deeply fragmented.

Scattered around Europe and the Middle East. it includes communists and Muslim fundamentalists. Sunnis and Shi'ites. Kurds and Arabs. disaffected government officials and lifelong rebels. all with different aims for a post-Saddam Iraq.

Even while President Saddam remains in power, his opponents sometimes cannot help breaking ranks.

Kurdish faction leader Massoud Barzani requested President Saddam's military intervention last August in his long-running feud with rival Kurdish forces led by Jalal Talabani.

President Saddam's foray into northern Iraq, semi-autonomous since a Kurdish uprising which followed Baghdad's 1991 Gulf war defeat, didn't just shatter U.S. hopes for a united Kurdish opposition.

It made the region, a backdoor out of Baghdad for disgruntled Iraqis, unsafe for his opponents, undermining even further the chances of coordinated opposition from inside Iraq.

Iraqi dissidents in Baghdad's neighbouring capitals of Tehran, Damascus and Amman or in faraway London were helpless.

So when U.S. officials launched a coordinated rhetorical broadside against President Saddam last week the opposition took heart, even if analysts raised eyebrows in surprise at the U.S claims.

Not only had Washington shown it still saw President Saddam as a belligerent "demon". It said he faced a power struggle, had put his wife under house arrest, and his powerful eldest son Uday could lose his leg to gangrene after being shot in December.

"It is a signal to the ruling elite and army officers that Saddam has no future and that his status is not stable," said Hamid Al Bayati. spokesman of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI).

But even sympathetic observers say the opposition is in no state to capitalise on troubles in President Saddam's family.

"They are penetrated, antagonistic to each other, ineffective. and greedy," one Western diplomat said.

He said President Saddam's downfall was more likely to be at the hands of a general of the elite Republican Guard or a member of his extended family which makes up Baghdad's inner ruling circle than the scattered opposition.

A candidate with just those credentials emerged when President Saddam's son-in-law and weapons mastermind Hussein Kamel turned against him and defected to Jordan two years ago.

But the opposition spurned him, saying his hands were tainted with the same blood as President Saddam's.

The December gun and grenade attack on Uday Saddam Hussein also showed how little common ground is shared by the opposition groups. They could not agree who shot Uday. or why, or how badly he was injured.

Claims of responsibility came from a tribal spokesman and an Iranian-based Islamist group. His attackers fled variously through Jordan, northern Iraq or Iran, and Uday is now paralysed, sexually impotent, close to death, or all three.

Before the Gulf war of 1991 there were 20 Iraqi opposition groups. The number rose to over 100 in the months that followed with defections of military and political officials.

As well as the Kurdish opposition and the coalition Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the Iraqi National Congress (INC) forms the third main alliance, grouping 30 factions.Amman also hosts the Iraqi National Accord (INA), made up mainly of ex-Baathists and government officials.

The Kurds seek a form of expanded autonomy for the northern Kurdish provinces. while the INC and INA have called for a liberal democratic government to replace Saddam's rule.

The SCIRI is a coalition of six Shi'ite fundamentalist groups. Based in Tehran with an army of a few thousand near the Iraqi border, it seeks an Iranian-style Islamic state in Iraq.

Israel holding 3,000 Palestinians — group

GAZA CITY (AFP) — A total of 3.007 Palestinians are currently being held in Israeli prisons, including 28 women, the Palestinian prisoner rights group Al Damir said in a report published on Sunday.

The Gaza-based group said it compiled a list of prisoners ahead of scheduled negotiations with Israel on the resumption of prisoner releases to be carried out under a 1995 interim peace accord.

Last month the two sides agreed to resume talks on the prisoner issue and to release the last Palestinian women held in Israeli jails as part of a deal which led to the extension of self-rule to the West Bank city of Hebron.

Palestinian officials said the Israelis have promised to release the women prisoners by the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

But the Palestinian cabinet complained on Friday that talks on the prisoner issue had yet to resume despite an agreement such negotiations would begin immediately after Israel's troop withdrawal from most of Hebron, which took place on Jan. 17.

In its report, Al Damir said the 3.007 Palestinian prisoners were being held in a dozen jails and detention centres across Israel.

Of the total. 291 were held without trial under so-called "administrative detention" orders, 357 were under the age of 18 and 480 were listed as sick or elderly.

The total also included 69 Palestinian Israeli citizens held for political reasons and 77 persons arrested trying to infiltrate into Israel from neighbouring states or via the sea.

S. Arabia, Yemen pledge quick border settlement

JEDDAH (AFP) — King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and President Ali Abdallah Saleh of Yemen said they were determined to resolve a 60-year-old desert border dispute as soon as possible, official sources said Sunday.

Mr. Saleh has complained about the slow pace of talks since both sides signed agreement in principle in 1995 to settle their dispute by demarcating the border, recognising Saudi claims to border areas and normalising ties.

During a meeting overnight in Jeddah Saturday, the two leaders discussed "how to resolve the border issue in a satisfactory way for both sides," the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said.

They were "determined to resolve this issue as soon as possible and decided to pursue talks between officials of the two brotherly countries to strengthen ties based on helping the security and stability of both countries." it said.

King Fahd and Mr. Saleh also talked about "developments on the Arab. Islamic and international fronts and expressed the hope of a unification of Arab and Islamic ranks." SPA said.

Before arriving here Saturday. Mr. Saleh said he would hold talks with King Fahd about the fighting in Sudan and Arab-Israeli peace process.

Mr. Saleh left the kingdom on Sunday after making the small pilgrimage. or Umra. to Mecca.

The two countries have improved ties since the two sides fought armed clashes along the border in January 1995 and since Saudi Arabia accused Yemen of supporting Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Under the agreement in principle signed in February 1995 in the Holy City of Mecca. Yemen abandoned its claim to the border provinces of Najran. Assir and Jizane which came under Riyadh's authority in 1934 following a war.

Sanaa considers the Mecca agreement as the basis for a comprehensive treaty which includes economic cooperation. while Riyadh has stressed the deal's role in resolving the border problem.

Yemen is counting on Saudi Arabia to ease economic difficulties which worsened during its 1994 north-south civil war.

Castro's doctor to travel to Iraq and treat Uday

AMMAN (AFP) — The private surgeon of Cuban President Fidel Castro is expected in Baghdad to treat Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's son Uday. wounded in a December assassination attempt. Iraqi sources said here Sunday.

Mr. Castro's physician, identified only as a Dr. Cardinas and a Cuban colleague. both bone surgeons, are due to arrive soon. the sources added.

Iraqi sources in Amman have said that Uday's Iraqi and French doctors agree that he needs a dangerous operation on his spine to remove two bullets lodged between vertebrae from the Dec. 12 attempt on his life.

"This operation. which carries the risk of causing total paralysis or death. has become unavoidable because of the deterioration of Uday's health." the sources said.

They said Uday's pancreas was badly damaged and that he still had two bullets lodged in the pelvis area, adding that surgery could only be performed abroad.

Paris ruled out Uday receiving treatment in France. a decision that was fiercely condemned by Iraq.

A U.S. military official said last week that Uday was semi-paralysed and in danger of losing a leg to gangrene.

Dr. Cardinas spent time in Baghdad during the 1980s to treat a back problem troubling President Saddam at the time.

Uday was shown Sunday in his hospital bed smiling and speaking to a visitor from Qatar.

Babel newspaper and Youth Television, which are run by Uday, showed Qatar's Sheikh Khalifa Ben Hamad Al Thani shaking hands with Uday at Ben Sina hospital in their second meeting since he was shot wounded.

Sheikh Khalifa. a Qatari sports official. was the first foreign official to visit the 33-year-old Uday. who is the head of the Iraqi Olympic Committee. when he saw him five days after the attack.

Both the Iranian-based Shiite Muslim opposition group Al Daawa and a lesser known group Al Nahda have claimed responsibility for the attack in separate statements.

"We have come to be assured of your health and thank God we have seen you in a better condition." Babel. quoted Sheikh Khalifa as saying.

Youth Television. on Saturday showed him shaking hands and kissing the Qatari delegation while lying in his hospital bed.

Iraq blamed a pro-Iranian group for the attack and has urged the U.N. to press Iran to hand over the attackers. Iranian officials have denied the charges.

The Iraqi opposition in London said it believed Nahda's claim. but Iraqi newspapers have blamed Daawa members paid by Iran.

COLUMN 8

Indian guru conjures up gold chain for Fergie

BANGALORE (R) — An Indian guru produced a gold chain and cross. apparently out of thin air, and gave it to visiting British royal Sarah Ferguson. a holistic healer who brought her to India said. Dr. Isaac Mathai. a homoeopath treating the Duchess of York. told Reuters in the southern city of Bangalore that the event happened during her meeting with Sai Baba in the nearby town of Puttaparthi. Asked if the guru. who is often said by his followers to conjure up gifts from nowhere. produced anything for the duchess. Mathai said: "Lots of vibhuti (sacred ash). And she got a gold chain with a cross."

Britain carried out germ tests in London

LONDON (R) — British Defence Ministry scientists carried out secret germ warfare tests in central London and southern England between 1963 and 1977. a newspaper reported. The Sunday Telegraph said "simulants" of biological warfare agents were exposed in public places in London such as Waterloo Bridge and the Thames Embankment and along the south coast. Simulants are organisms designed to mimic the behaviour of virulent biological warfare germs without having the same harmful effects. It said Defence Secretary Michael Portillo disclosed details of the tests in a letter to a member of parliament for the main opposition Labour Party in which he said the simulants used were "judged to present no risk to public health." But it also quoted leading microbiologists as saying that some of the simulants could cause pneumonia and other ailments.

Mystery American wins world's biggest pigeon race

SUN CITY. South Africa (R) — A mystery American living in London became $250,000 richer when a pigeon he sponsored was first back to the loft in the world's richest homing race. David Barlow's aptly named bird "It's Worth a Flutter" was first through the traps at South Africa's luxury Sun City resort 160 kilometres northwest of Johannesburg after averaging 87 kilometres per hour for nearly seven hours in the world free flight race. Organisers gave Barlow's name and a London telephone number. but there was no further details about the winning entrant — whether he was among avid international pigeon fanciers who entered an original 1.800-odd birds. or merely a "punter" who staked the $1.000 entry fee in a blind gamble.

Spain screens purported Marilyn Monroe porn film

ViLASECA. Spain (R) — A Spanish film festival screened a short pornographic film purporting to show a young Marilyn Monroe engaging in explicit sex acts. But viewers at Spain's first record and film collectors festival were sceptical about the identity of the actress. Mikel Bursa. promoter of the 1947 film. defended its authenticity and said he had sold 40 copies for $260.000 each to international distributors by the end of the day at the festival in Vilaseca. about 100 kilometres south of Barcelona. The six-minute black-and-white film has prompted a flurry of interest among collectors and a storm of protest from the Hollywood legend's estate.